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THE UNCANNY X-MEN®

GUEST-STARRING KA-ZAR!

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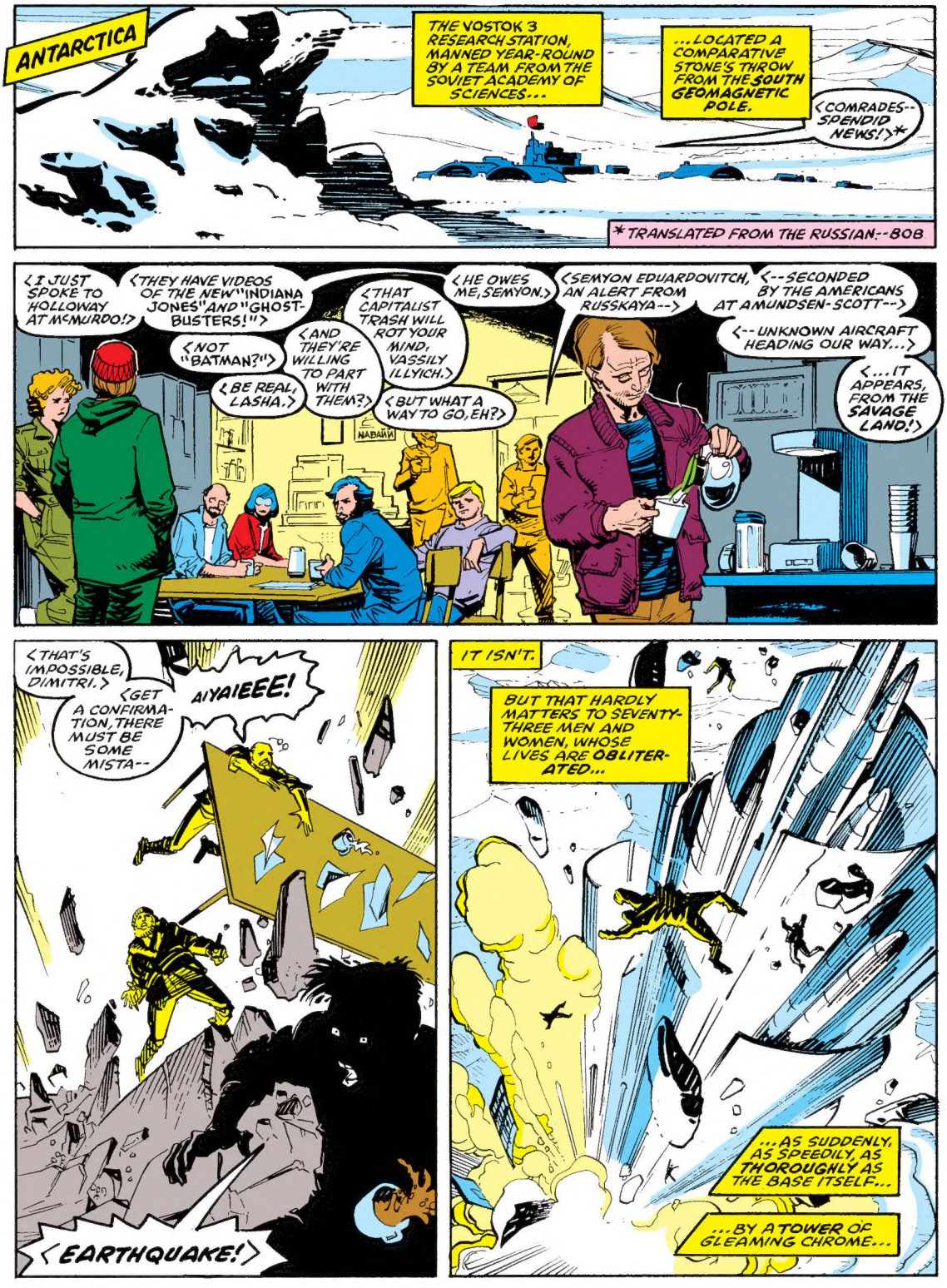

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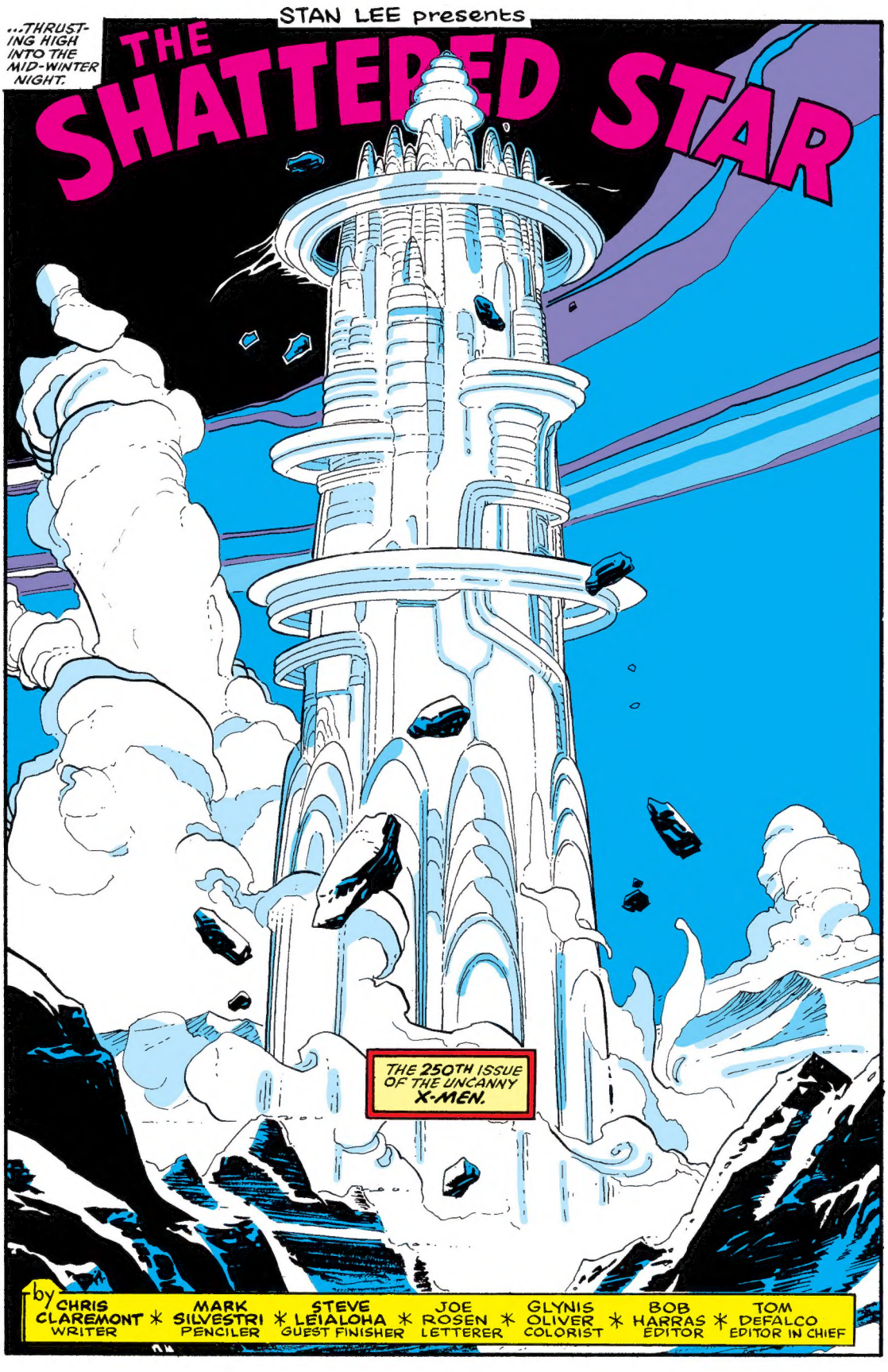
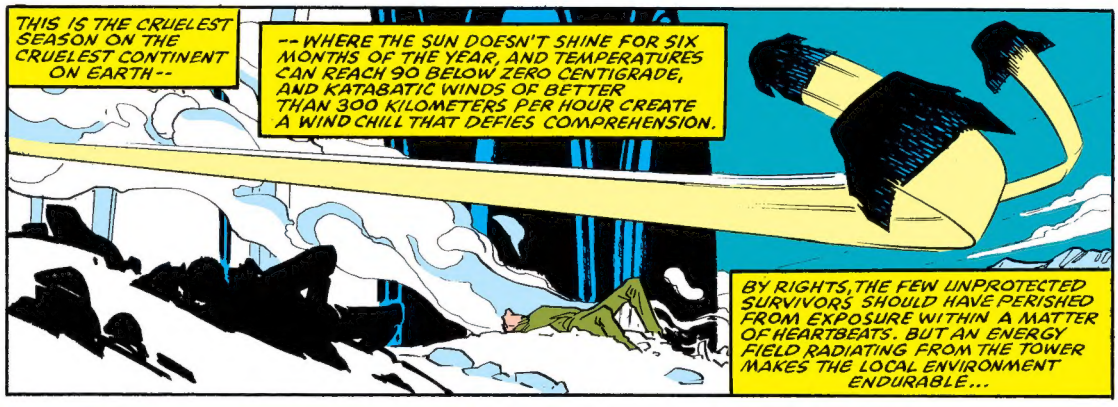
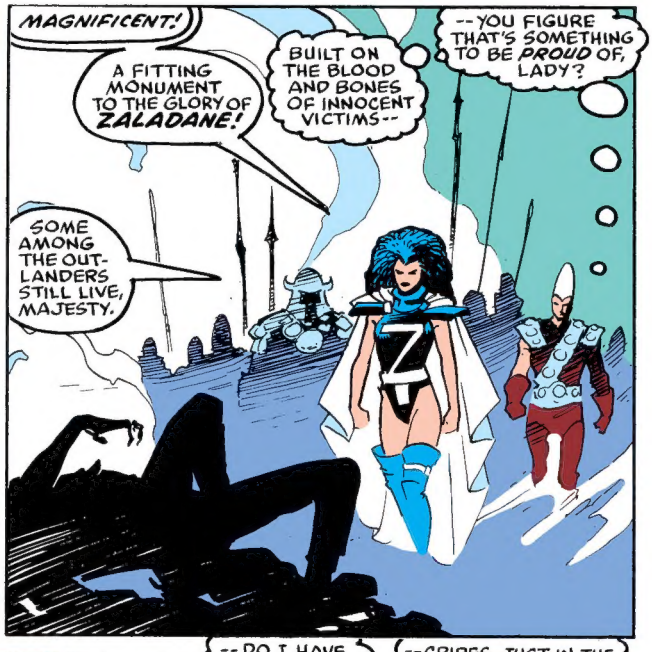
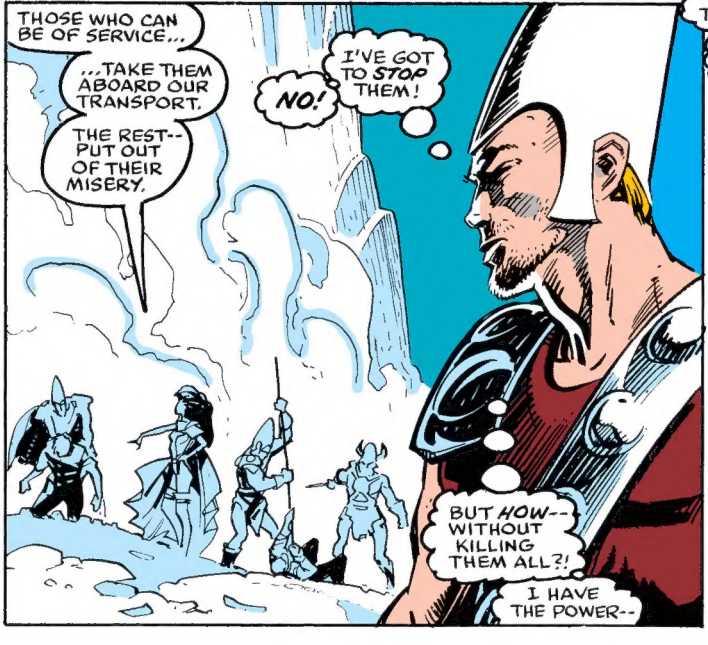

STAN LEE presents
...THRUSTING HIGH INTO THE MID-WINTER NIGHT.
THE SHATTERED STAR
THE 250TH ISSUE OF THE UNCANNY X-MEN.
by CHRIS CLAREMONT WRITER * MARK SILVESTRI PENCILER * STEVE LEIALOHA GUEST FINISHER * JOE ROSEN LETTERER * GLYNIS OLIVER COLORIST * BOB HARRAS EDITOR * TOM DEFALCO EDITOR IN CHIEF

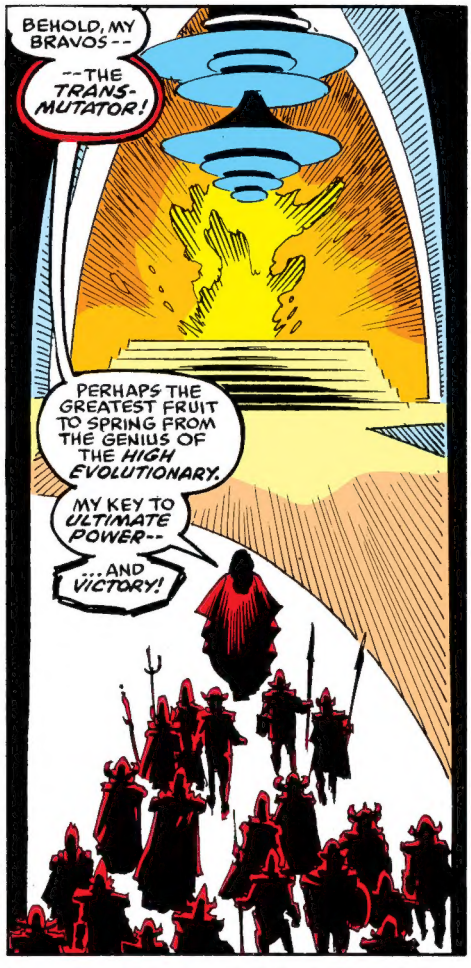

THIS IS THE CRUELEST SEASON ON THE CRUELEST CONTINENT ON EARTH--
--WHERE THE SUN DOESN'T SHINE FOR SIX MONTHS OF THE YEAR, AND TEMPERATURES CAN REACH 90 BELOW ZERO CENTIGRADE, AND KATABATIC WINDS OF BETTER THAN 300 KILOMETERS PER HOUR CREATE A WIND CHILL THAT DEFIES COMPREHENSION.
BY RIGHTS, THE FEW UNPROTECTED SURVIVORS SHOULD HAVE PERISHED FROM EXPOSURE WITHIN A MATTER OF HEARTBEATS. BUT AN ENERGY FIELD RADIATING FROM THE TOWER MAKES THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT ENDURABLE...

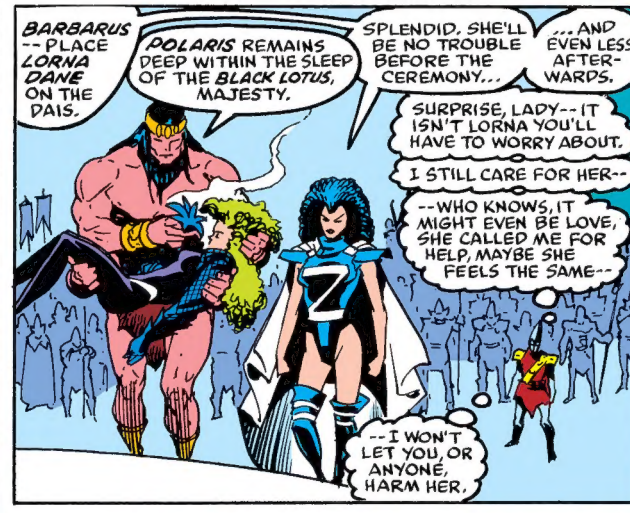
...AND THUS SPARES THEM, SADLY, FOR A FAR MORE TERRIBLE FATE TO COME.
IT'S MURDER--
-- THE SAME AS THE ATTACK ON PUNTA ARENAS.*
BUT WHY?!
WHERE'D THAT TOWER COME FROM?!!
WHAT'S ITS PURPOSE?!?
*LAST ISSUE.--BOB

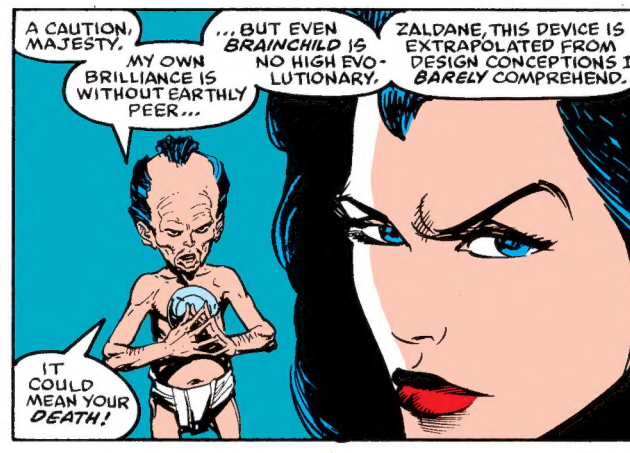

MAGNIFICENT!
A FITTING MONUMENT TO THE GLORY OF ZALADANE!
BUILT ON THE BLOOD AND BONES OF INNOCENT VICTIMS--
--YOU FIGURE THAT'S SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF, LADY?
SOME AMONG THE OUT-LANDERS STILL LIVE, MAJESTY.

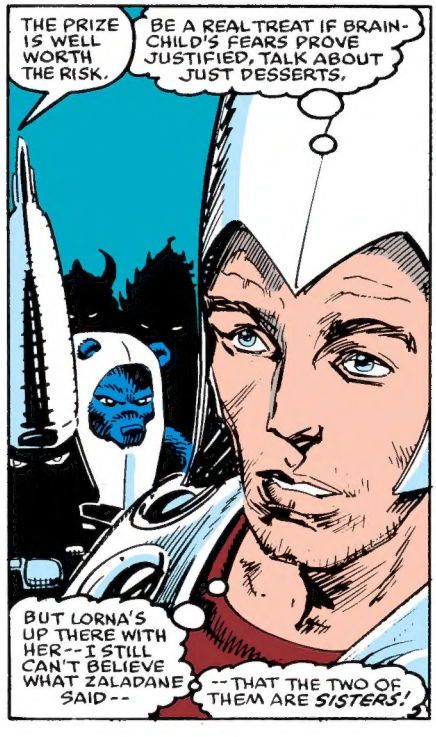

THOSE WHO CAN BE OF SERVICE...
...TAKE THEM ABOARD OUR TRANSPORT.
THE REST-- PUT OUT OF THEIR MISERY.
NO!
I'VE GOT TO STOP THEM!
BUT HOW-- WITHOUT KILLING THEM ALL?!
I HAVE THE POWER--

-- DO I HAVE THE STOMACH?
EVERYTHING'S HAPPENING SO FAST--
--CRIPES, JUST IN THE FEW SECONDS I WAS THINKING ABOUT IT, THEY FINISHED THE JOB.
MAYBE IT'S BETTER THIS WAY.
BIDE MY TIME --WATCH AND LEARN ALL I CAN...
...BEFORE I MAKE MY MOVE.

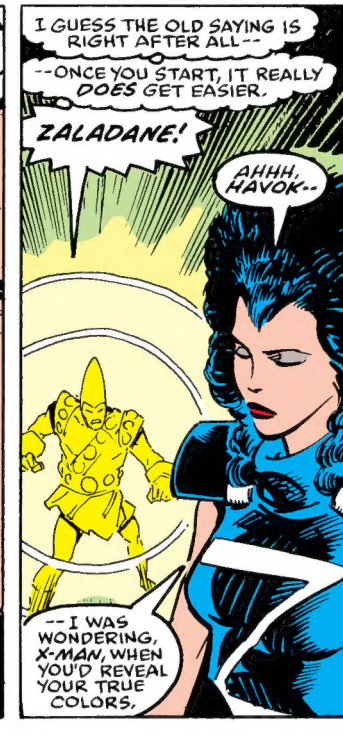

BEHOLD, MY BRAVOS--
--THE TRANS-MUTATOR!
PERHAPS THE GREATEST FRUIT TO SPRING FROM THE GENIUS OF THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY.
MY KEY TO ULTIMATE POWER--
...AND VICTORY!

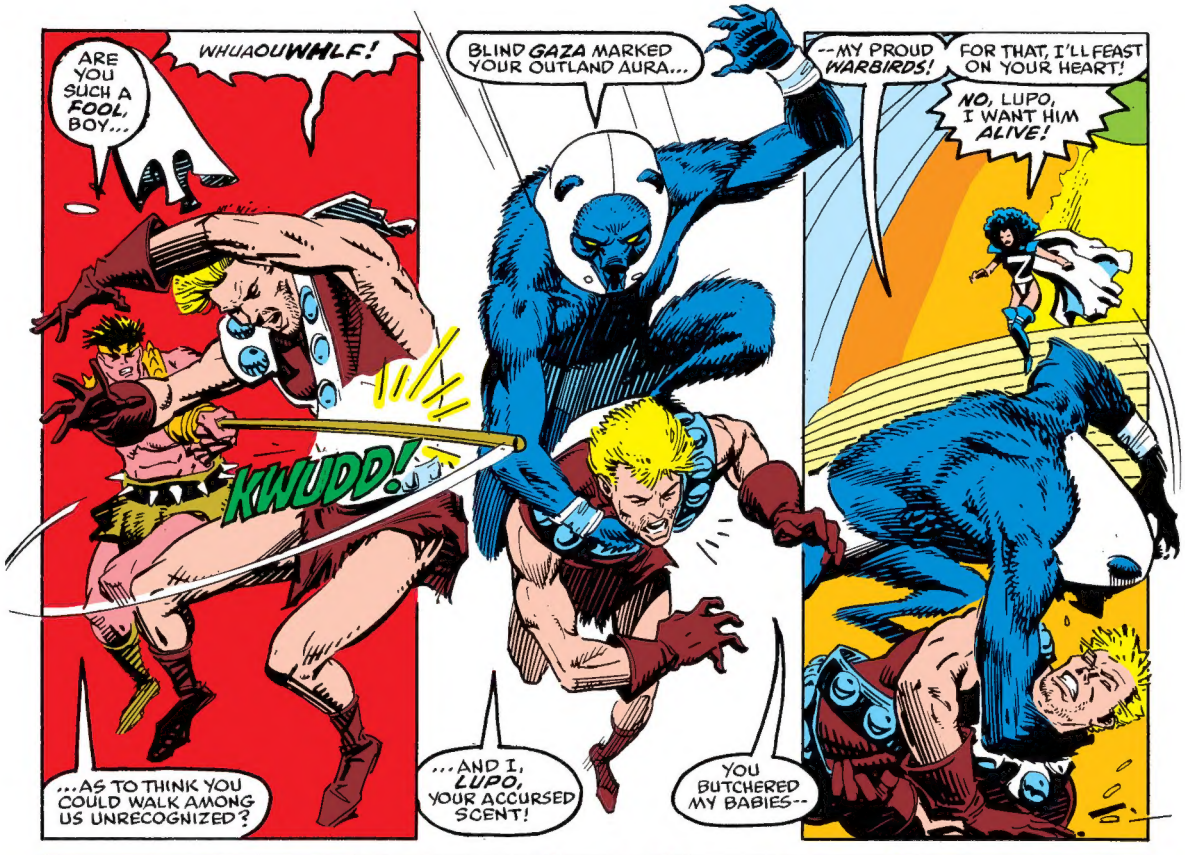

BARBARUS --PLACE LORNA DANE ON THE DAIS.
POLARIS REMAINS DEEP WITHIN THE SLEEP OF THE BLACK LOTUS, MAJESTY.
SPLENDID. SHE'LL BE NO TROUBLE BEFORE THE CEREMONY...
...AND EVEN LESS AFTER-WARDS.
SURPRISE, LADY--IT ISN'T LORNA YOU'LL HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT.
I STILL CARE FOR HER--
--WHO KNOWS, IT MIGHT EVEN BE LOVE, SHE CALLED ME FOR HELP, MAYBE SHE FEELS THE SAME--
--I WON'T LET YOU, OR ANYONE, HARM HER.

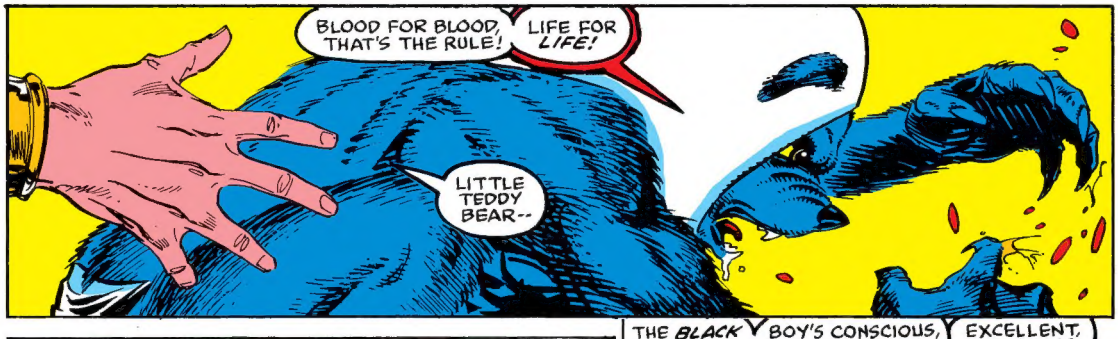

A CAUTION, MAJESTY.
MY OWN BRILLIANCE IS WITHOUT EARTHLY PEER...
...BUT EVEN BRAINCHILD IS NO HIGH EVO-LUTIONARY.
ZALDANE, THIS DEVICE IS EXTRAPOLATED FROM DESIGN CONCEPTIONS I BARELY COMPREHEND.
IT COULD MEAN YOUR DEATH!

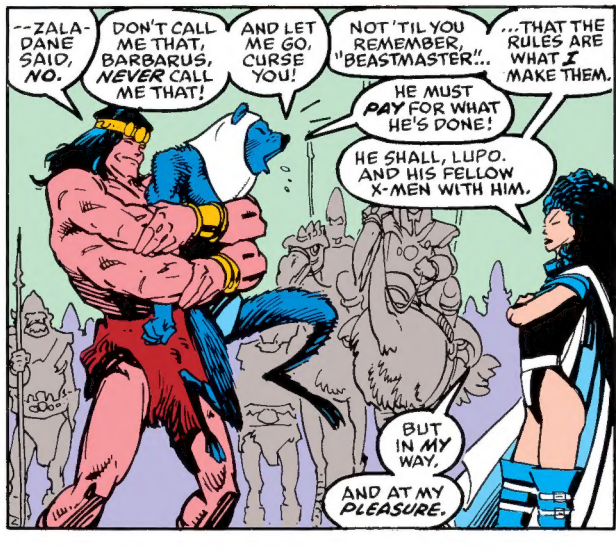

THE PRIZE IS WELL WORTH THE RISK.
BE A REAL TREAT IF BRAIN-CHILD'S FEARS PROVE JUSTIFIED, TALK ABOUT JUST DESSERTS.
BUT LORNA'S UP THERE WITH HER--I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT ZALADANE SAID--
--THAT THE TWO OF THEM ARE SISTERS!

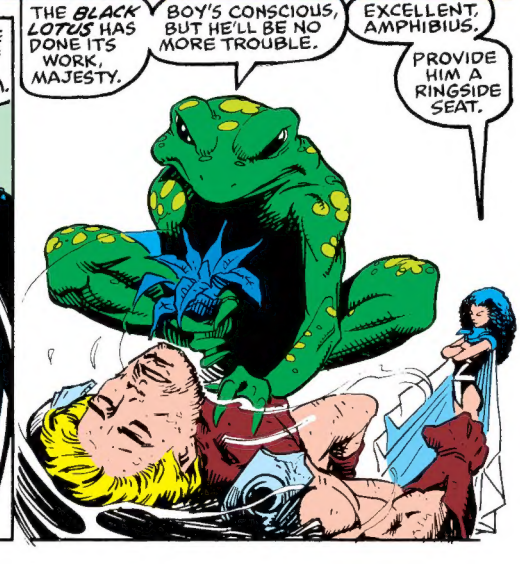
TIME TO FISH OR CUT BAIT, HERO.
ONLY I DON'T HAVE THE EXCUSE OF BEING TAKEN BY SURPRISE.
IF I DON'T ACT, I'VE ONLY MYSELF TO BLAME.

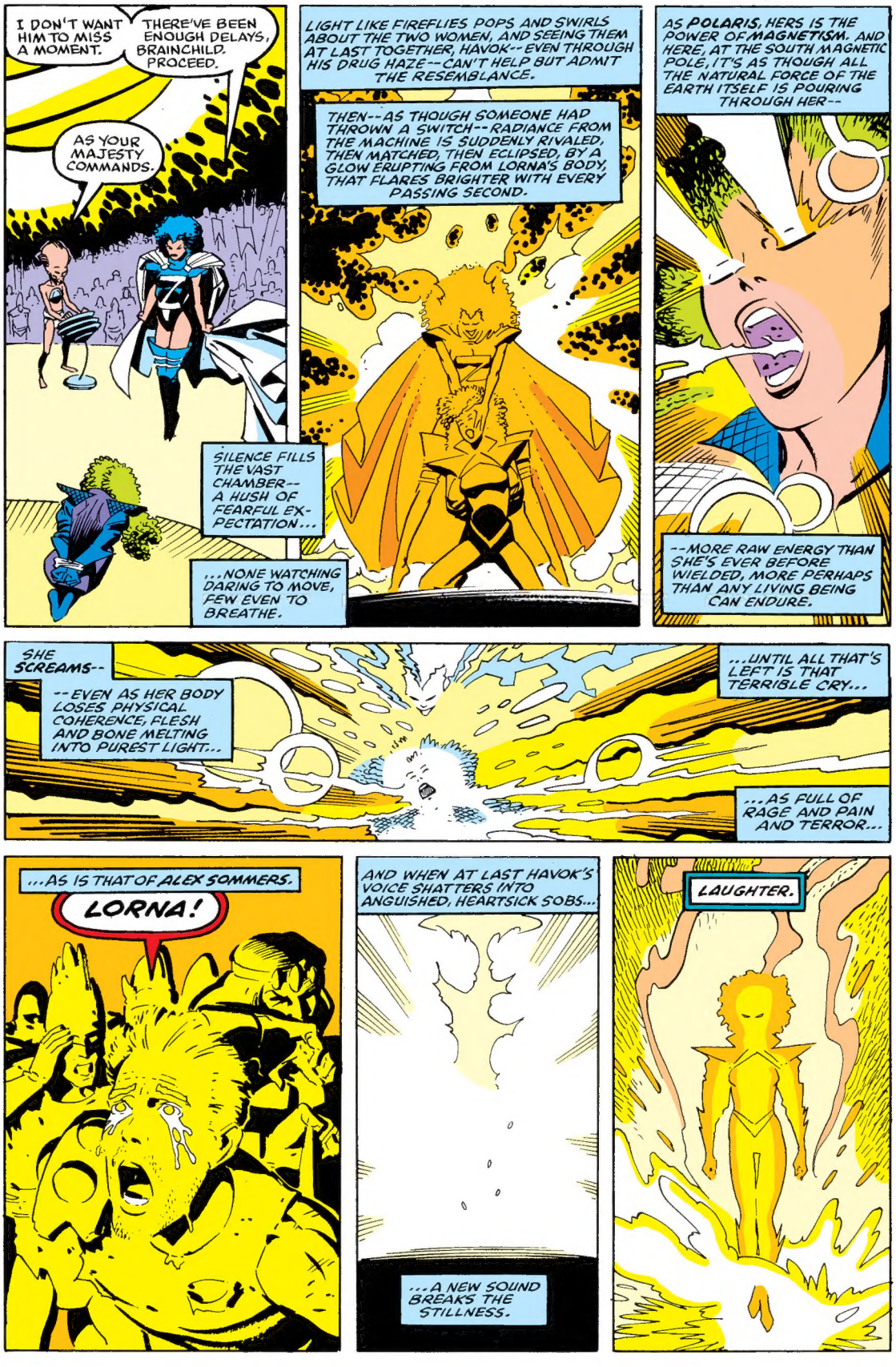

I GUESS THE OLD SAYING IS RIGHT AFTER ALL--
--ONCE YOU START, IT REALLY DOES GET EASIER.
ZALADANE!
AHHH, HAVOK--
--I WAS WONDERING, X-MAN, WHEN YOU'D REVEAL YOUR TRUE COLORS.

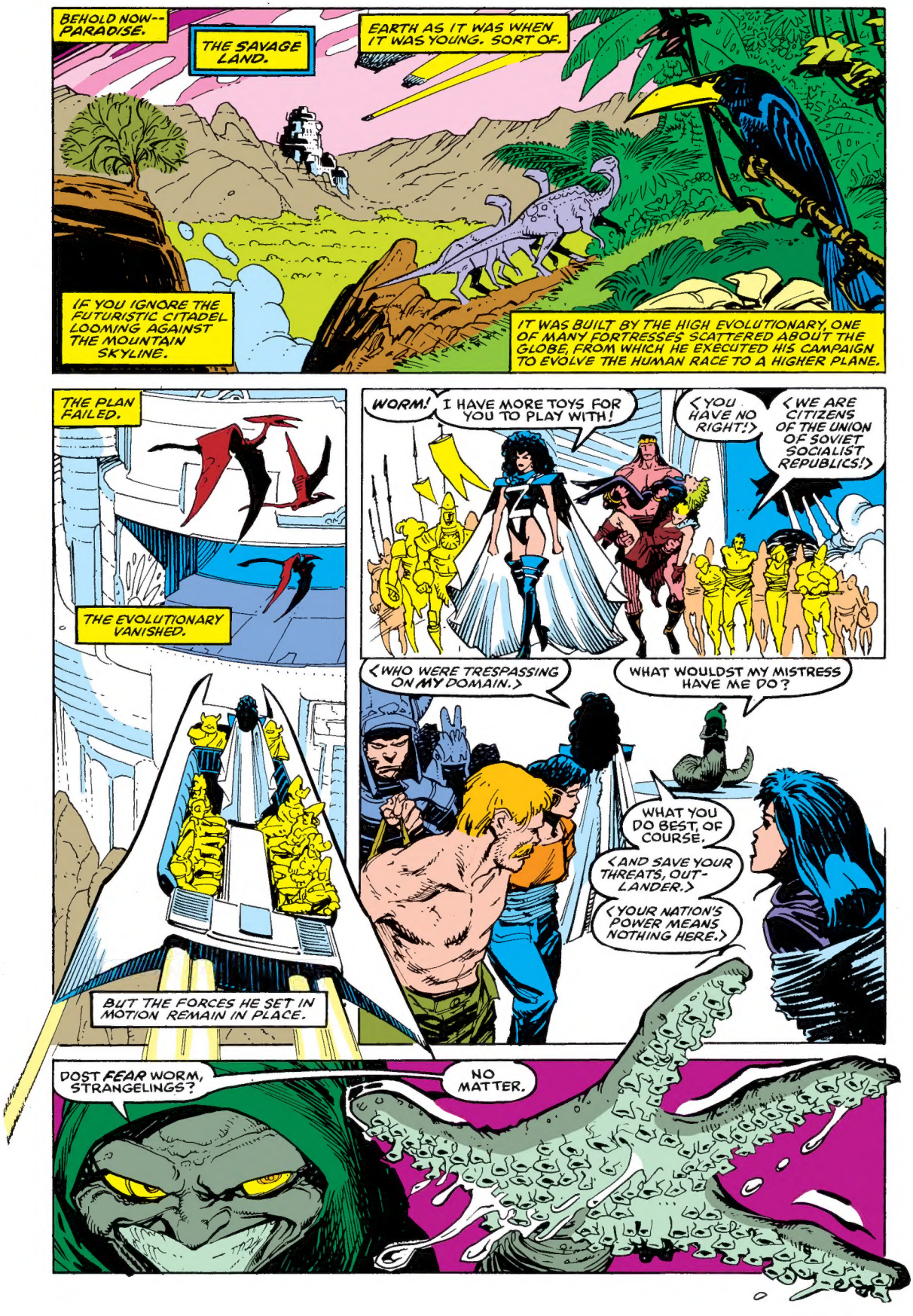

ARE YOU SUCH A FOOL, BOY...
WHUAOUWHLF!
KWUDD!
...AS TO THINK YOU COULD WALK AMONG US UNRECOGNIZED?
BLIND GAZA MARKED YOUR OUTLAND AURA...
...AND I, LUPO, YOUR ACCURSED SCENT!
YOU BUTCHERED MY BABIES--
--MY PROUD WARBIRDS!
FOR THAT, I'LL FEAST ON YOUR HEART!
NO, LUPO, I WANT HIM ALIVE!

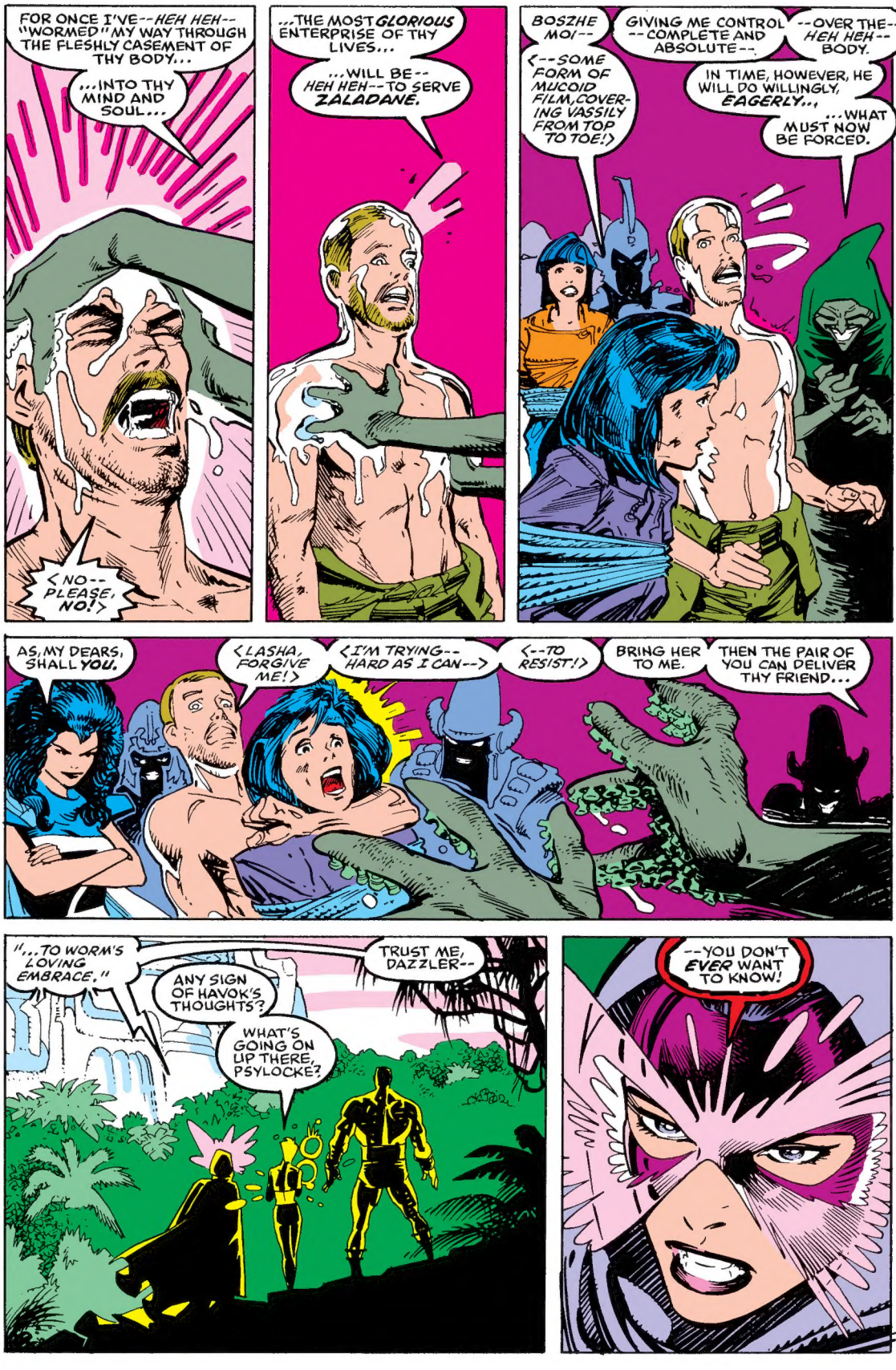

BLOOD FOR BLOOD, THAT'S THE RULE!
LIFE FOR LIFE!
LITTLE TEDDY BEAR--

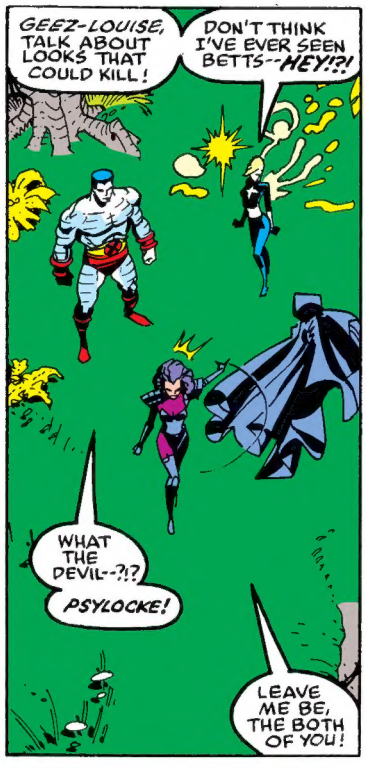

--ZALADANE SAID, NO.
DON'T CALL ME THAT, BARBARUS, NEVER CALL ME THAT!
AND LET ME GO, CURSE YOU!
NOT 'TIL YOU REMEMBER, "BEASTMASTER"...
...THAT THE RULES ARE WHAT I MAKE THEM.
HE MUST PAY FOR WHAT HE'S DONE!
HE SHALL, LUPO. AND HIS FELLOW X-MEN WITH HIM.
BUT IN MY WAY,
AND AT MY PLEASURE.

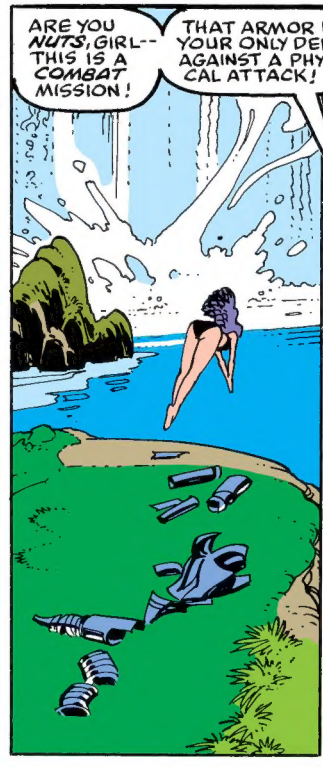

THE BLACK LOTUS HAS DONE ITS WORK, MAJESTY.
BOY'S CONSCIOUS, BUT HE'LL BE NO MORE TROUBLE.
EXCELLENT, AMPHIBIUS.
PROVIDE HIM A RINGSIDE SEAT.

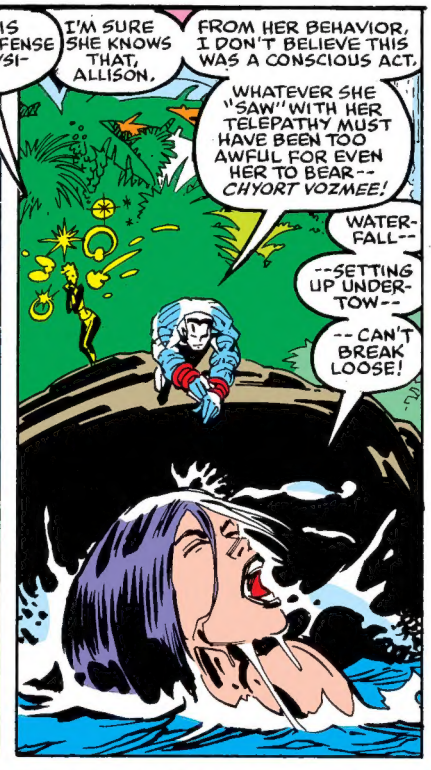

I DON'T WANT HIM TO MISS A MOMENT.
THERE'VE BEEN ENOUGH DELAYS, BRAINCHILD. PROCEED.
AS YOUR MAJESTY COMMANDS.
SILENCE FILLS THE VAST CHAMBER--A HUSH OF FEARFUL EXPECTATION...
...NONE WATCHING DARING TO MOVE, FEW EVEN TO BREATHE.
LIGHT LIKE FIREFLIES POPS AND SWIRLS ABOUT THE TWO WOMEN, AND SEEING THEM AT LAST TOGETHER, HAVOK--EVEN THROUGH HIS DRUG HAZE--CAN'T HELP BUT ADMIT THE RESEMBLANCE.
THEN--AS THOUGH SOMEONE HAD THROWN A SWITCH--RADIANCE FROM THE MACHINE IS SUDDENLY RIVALED, THEN MATCHED, THEN ECLIPSED, BY A GLOW ERUPTING FROM LORNA'S BODY, THAT FLARES BRIGHTER WITH EVERY PASSING SECOND.
AS POLARIS, HERS IS THE POWER OF MAGNETISM. AND HERE, AT THE SOUTH MAGNETIC POLE, IT'S AS THOUGH ALL THE NATURAL FORCE OF THE EARTH ITSELF IS POURING THROUGH HER--
--MORE RAW ENERGY THAN SHE'S EVER BEFORE WIELDED, MORE PERHAPS THAN ANY LIVING BEING CAN ENDURE.
SHE SCREAMS--
--EVEN AS HER BODY LOSES PHYSICAL COHERENCE, FLESH AND BONE MELTING INTO PUREST LIGHT...
...UNTIL ALL THAT'S LEFT IS THAT TERRIBLE CRY...
...AS FULL OF RAGE AND PAIN AND TERROR...
...AS IS THAT OF ALEX SOMMERS.
LORNA!
AND WHEN AT LAST HAVOK'S VOICE SHATTERS INTO ANGUISHED, HEARTSICK SOBS...
...A NEW SOUND BREAKS THE STILLNESS.
LAUGHTER.

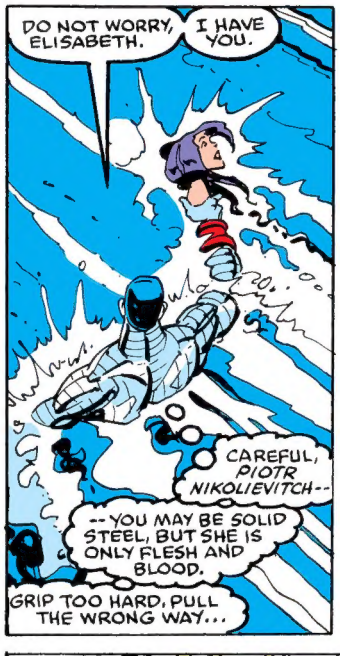

BEHOLD NOW--PARADISE.
THE SAVAGE LAND.
EARTH AS IT WAS WHEN IT WAS YOUNG. SORT OF.
IF YOU IGNORE THE FUTURISTIC CITADEL LOOMING AGAINST THE MOUNTAIN SKYLINE.
IT WAS BUILT BY THE HIGH EVOLUTIONARY, ONE OF MANY FORTRESSES SCATTERED ABOUT THE GLOBE, FROM WHICH HE EXECUTED HIS CAMPAIGN TO EVOLVE THE HUMAN RACE TO A HIGHER PLANE.
THE PLAN FAILED.
THE EVOLUTIONARY VANISHED.
BUT THE FORCES HE SET IN MOTION REMAIN IN PLACE.
WORM!
I HAVE MORE TOYS FOR YOU TO PLAY WITH!
<YOU HAVE NO RIGHT!>
<WE ARE CITIZENS OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS!>
<WHO WERE TRESPASSING ON MY DOMAIN.>
WHAT WOULDST MY MISTRESS HAVE ME DO?
WHAT YOU DO BEST, OF COURSE.
<AND SAVE YOUR THREATS, OUT-LANDER.>
<YOUR NATION'S POWER MEANS NOTHING HERE.>
DOST FEAR WORM, STRANGELINGS?
NO MATTER.


FOR ONCE I'VE--HEH HEH--"WORMED" MY WAY THROUGH THE FLESHLY CASEMENT OF THY BODY...
...INTO THY MIND AND SOUL...
<NO--PLEASE, NO!>
...THE MOST GLORIOUS ENTERPRISE OF THY LIVES...
...WILL BE--HEH HEH--TO SERVE ZALADANE.
BOSZHE MOI--
<--SOME FORM OF MUCOID FILM, COVERING VASSILY FROM TOP TO TOE!>
GIVING ME CONTROL--COMPLETE AND ABSOLUTE--
--OVER THE--HEH HEH--BODY.
IN TIME, HOWEVER, HE WILL DO WILLINGLY, EAGERLY...
...WHAT MUST NOW BE FORCED.
AS, MY DEARS, SHALL YOU.
<LASHA, FORGIVE ME!>
<I'M TRYING--HARD AS I CAN-->
<--TO RESIST!>
BRING HER TO ME.
THEN THE PAIR OF YOU CAN DELIVER THY FRIEND...
"...TO WORM'S LOVING EMBRACE."
ANY SIGN OF HAVOK'S THOUGHTS?
WHAT'S GOING ON UP THERE, PSYLOCKE?
TRUST ME, DAZZLER--
--YOU DON'T EVER WANT TO KNOW!

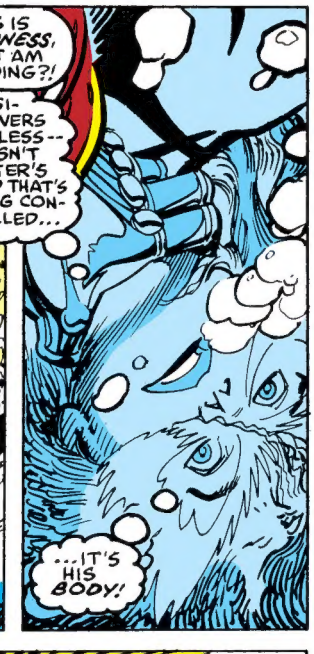

GEEZ-LOUISE, TALK ABOUT LOOKS THAT COULD KILL!
DON'T THINK I'VE EVER SEEN BETTS--HEY!?!
WHAT THE DEVIL--?!?
PSYLOCKE!
LEAVE ME BE, THE BOTH OF YOU!

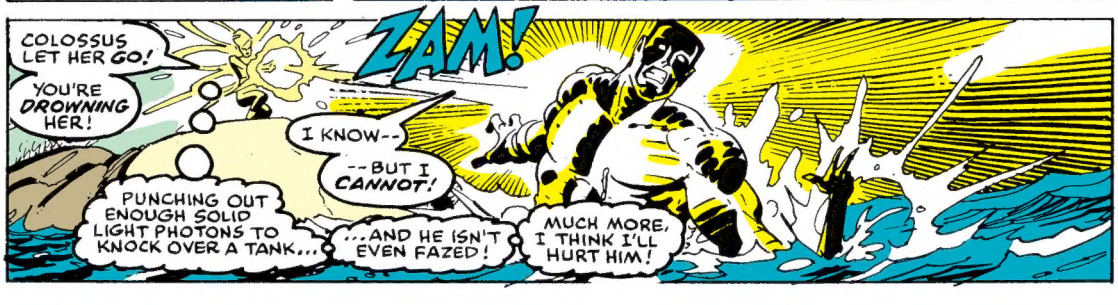

ARE YOU NUTS, GIRL--THIS IS A COMBAT MISSION!
THAT ARMOR IS YOUR ONLY DEFENSE AGAINST A PHYSICAL ATTACK!

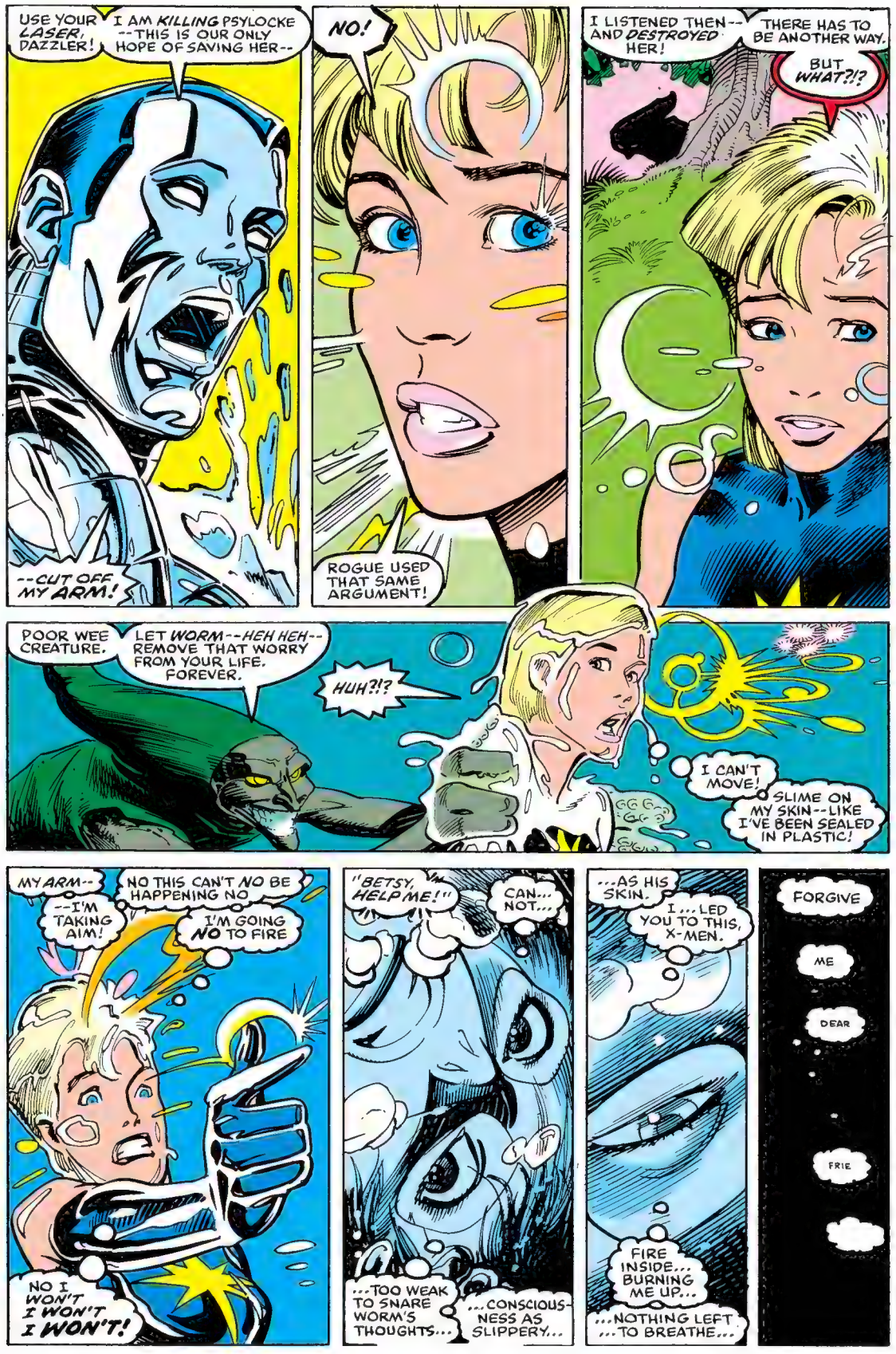

I'M SURE SHE KNOWS THAT, ALLISON.
FROM HER BEHAVIOR, I DON'T BELIEVE THIS WAS A CONSCIOUS ACT.
WHATEVER SHE "SAW" WITH HER TELEPATHY MUST HAVE BEEN TOO AWFUL FOR EVEN HER TO BEAR--CHYORT VOZMEE!
WATERFALL--
--SETTING UP UNDERTOW--
--CAN'T BREAK LOOSE!

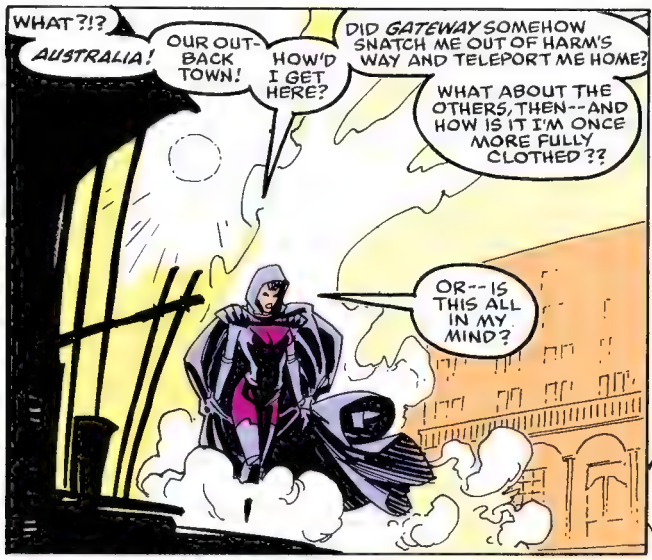

DO NOT WORRY, ELISABETH.
I HAVE YOU.
CAREFUL, PIOTR NIKOLIEVITCH--
--YOU MAY BE SOLID STEEL, BUT SHE IS ONLY FLESH AND BLOOD.
GRIP TOO HARD, PULL THE WRONG WAY...

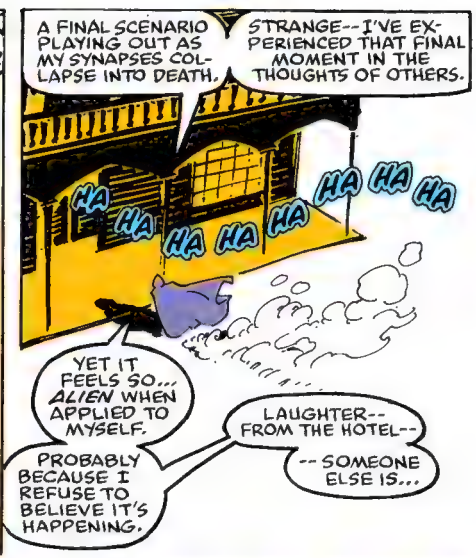
...YOU MAY WELL SNAP HER BONES LIKE--
--TWIGS?!!?
COLOSSUS!
GLUPGT!


THIS IS MADNESS, WHAT AM I DOING?!
PSI-POWERS USELESS--IT ISN'T PETER'S MIND THAT'S BEING CONTROLLED...
...IT'S HIS BODY!

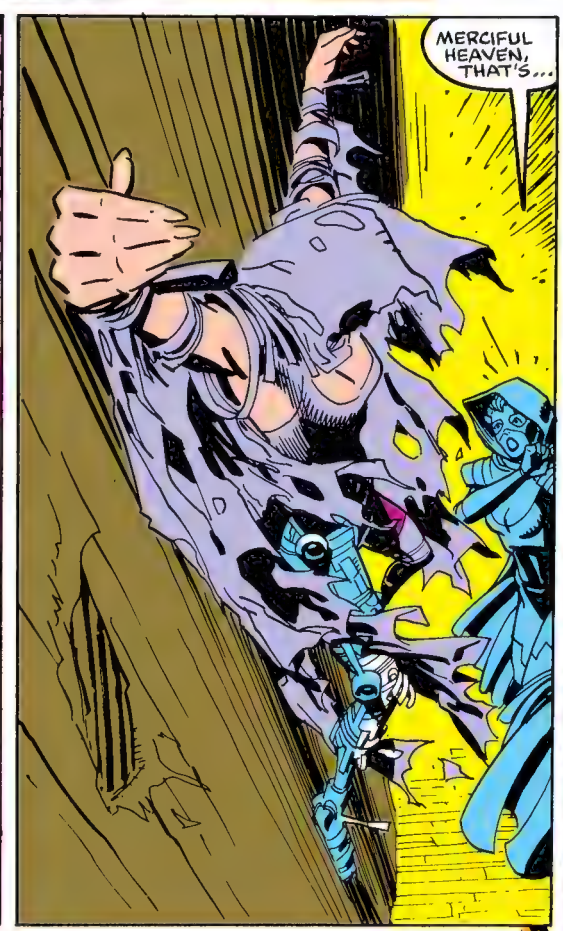

COLOSSUS LET HER GO!
YOU'RE DROWNING HER!
ZAM!
I KNOW--
--BUT I CANNOT!
PUNCHING OUT ENOUGH SOLID LIGHT PHOTONS TO KNOCK OVER A TANK...
...AND HE ISN'T EVEN FAZED!
MUCH MORE, I THINK I'LL HURT HIM!

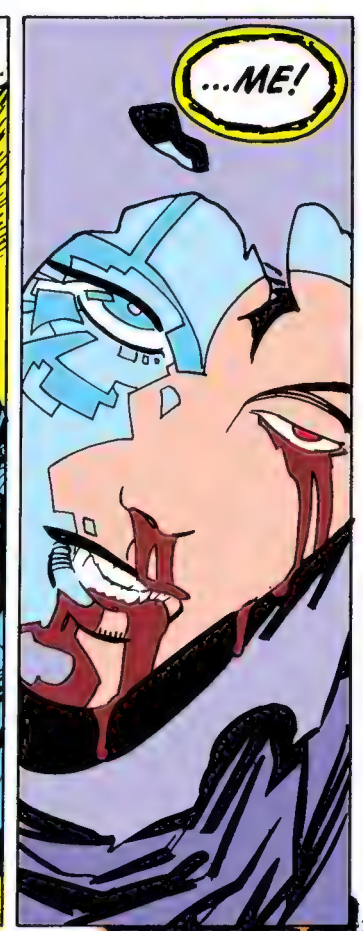

USE YOUR LASER, DAZZLER!
I AM KILLING PSYLOCKE --THIS IS OUR ONLY HOPE OF SAVING HER--
--CUT OFF MY ARM!
NO!
ROGUE USED THAT SAME ARGUMENT!
I LISTENED THEN-- AND DESTROYED HER!
THERE HAS TO BE ANOTHER WAY.
BUT WHAT?!?
POOR WEE CREATURE.
LET WORM--HEH HEH-- REMOVE THAT WORRY FROM YOUR LIFE. FOREVER.
HUH?!?
I CAN'T MOVE!
SLIME ON MY SKIN--LIKE I'VE BEEN SEALED IN PLASTIC!
MY ARM--
--I'M TAKING AIM!
NO THIS CAN'T NO BE HAPPENING NO
I'M GOING NO TO FIRE
NO I WON'T I WON'T I WON'T!
"BETSY, HELP ME!"
CAN... NOT...
...TOO WEAK TO SNARE WORM'S THOUGHTS...
...CONSCIOUS-NESS AS SLIPPERY...
...AS HIS SKIN.
I...LED YOU TO THIS, X-MEN.
FIRE INSIDE... BURNING ME UP...
...NOTHING LEFT ...TO BREATHE...
FORGIVE
ME
DEAR
FRIE

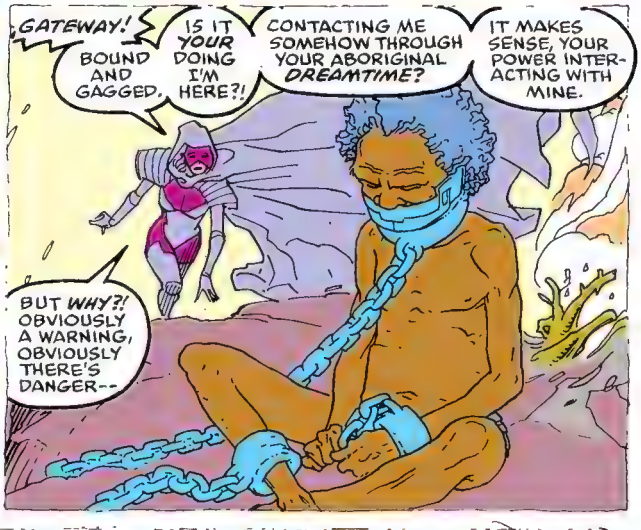

WHAT ?!?
AUSTRALIA!
OUR OUT-BACK TOWN!
HOW'D I GET HERE?
DID GATEWAY SOMEHOW SNATCH ME OUT OF HARM'S WAY AND TELEPORT ME HOME?
WHAT ABOUT THE OTHERS, THEN--AND HOW IS IT I'M ONCE MORE FULLY CLOTHED ??
OR--IS THIS ALL IN MY MIND?


A FINAL SCENARIO PLAYING OUT AS MY SYNAPSES COLLAPSE INTO DEATH.
STRANGE--I'VE EXPERIENCED THAT FINAL MOMENT IN THE THOUGHTS OF OTHERS.
HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA
YET IT FEELS SO... ALIEN WHEN APPLIED TO MYSELF.
PROBABLY BECAUSE I REFUSE TO BELIEVE IT'S HAPPENING.
LAUGHTER--FROM THE HOTEL--
--SOMEONE ELSE IS...

...HERE.


MERCIFUL HEAVEN, THAT'S...


...ME!



--BUT WHO'S RESPONSIBLE?!

IF WE RETURN HERE, ARE YOU SAYING IT'S TO CERTAIN DEATH?!!

BEFORE, YOU WOULDN'T SPEAK--

BLAST IT, OLD MAN, WHY CAN YOU ONLY GIVE US PIECES OF A PUZZLE?!

--NOW, YOU CAN'T!

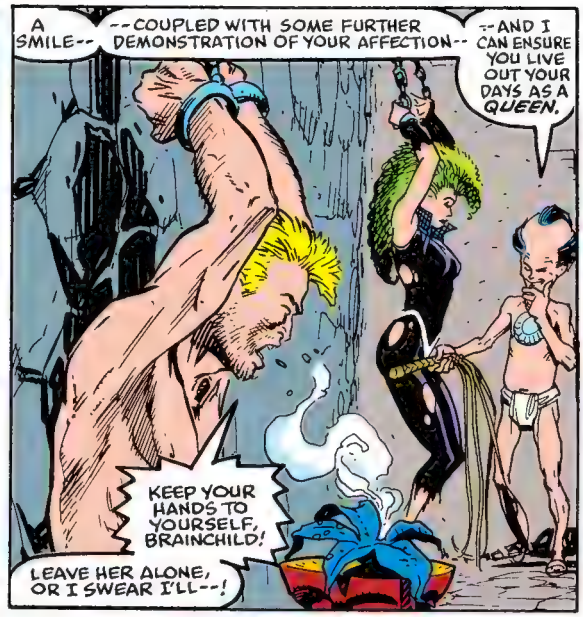
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO HELP--?!?

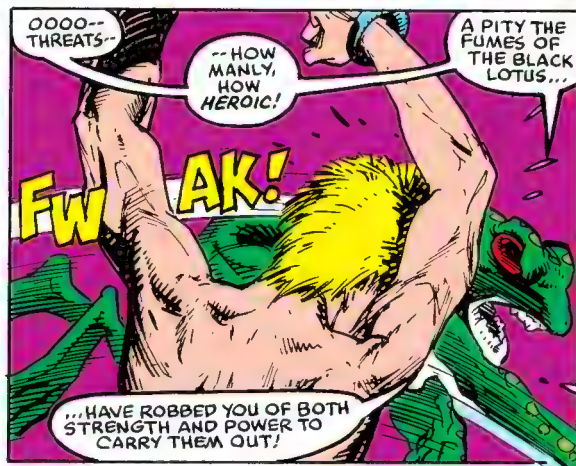
THE GEM-- THE PORTAL CRYSTAL OF THE SIEGE PERILOUS--

--IS THIS OUR ONLY HOPE, THEN...

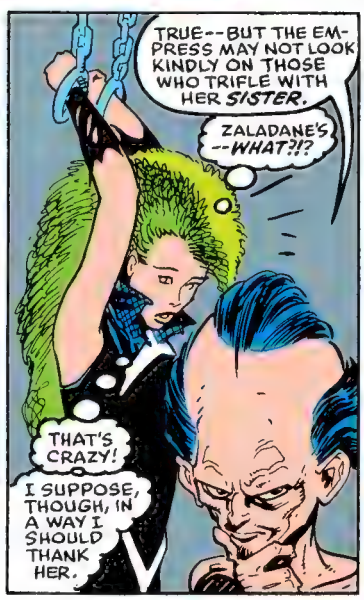
...TO RUN AWAY?

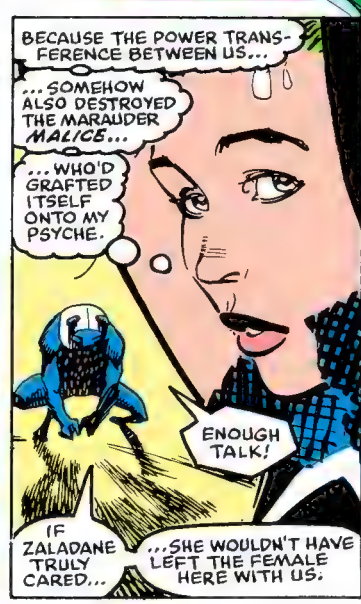
LATER.
BACK IN WHAT PASSES FOR US AS "REALITY"...
...IN THE DUNGEONS DEEP BENEATH ZALADANE'S FORTRESS...
A WOMAN AS LOVELY AS YOU, LORNADANE...
...SHOULD NOT BE IN SUCH A PLACE.
GLUGALUGALUG
ALUGALUG


A SMILE--
--COUPLED WITH SOME FURTHER DEMONSTRATION OF YOUR AFFECTION--
--AND I CAN ENSURE YOU LIVE OUT YOUR DAYS AS A QUEEN.
KEEP YOUR HANDS TO YOURSELF, BRAINCHILD!
LEAVE HER ALONE, OR I SWEAR I'LL--!

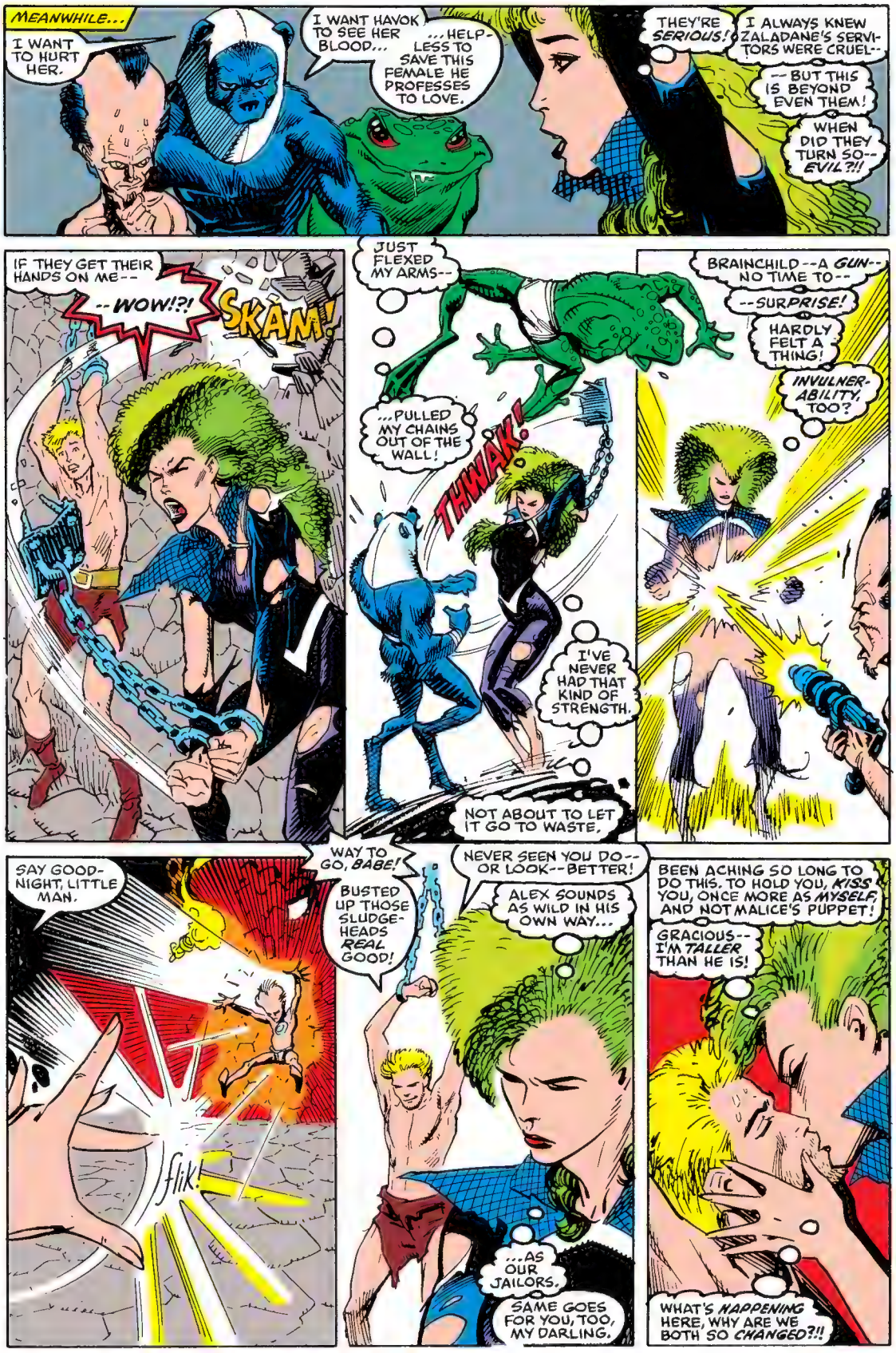

OOOO--THREATS--
--HOW MANLY, HOW HEROIC!
A PITY THE FUMES OF THE BLACK LOTUS...
FW
AK!
...HAVE ROBBED YOU OF BOTH STRENGTH AND POWER TO CARRY THEM OUT!

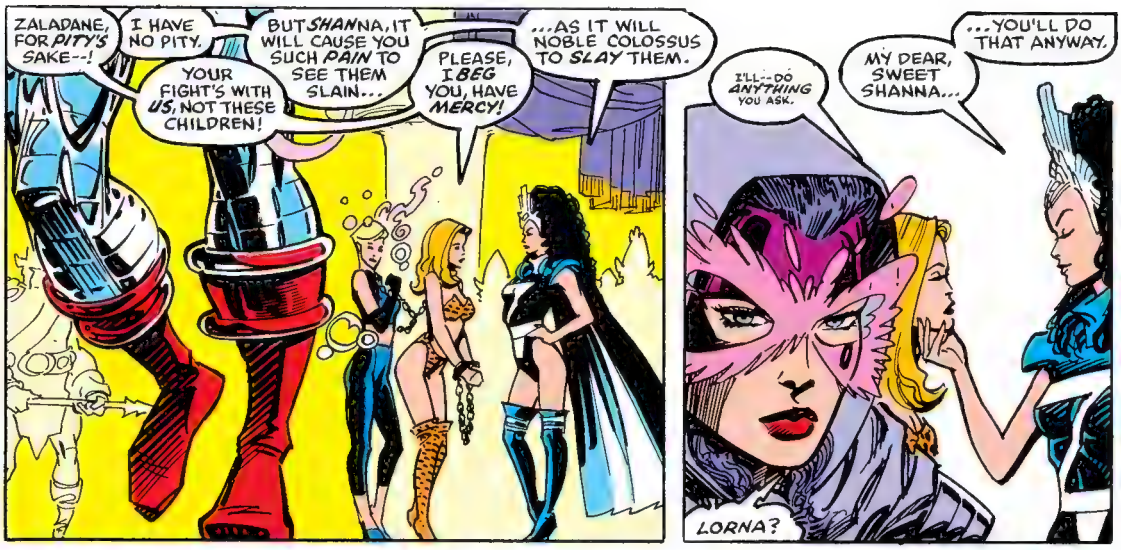
IF ANYONE--URRRP--DRAWS THE X-MAN'S BLOOD, AMPHIBIUS...
...IT'LL BE ME!
BESIDES, WHY WHY ASK THE FEMALE'S PERMISSION?
ZALADANE STOLE AWAY ALL HER POWERS, THERE'S NOTHING SHE CAN DO TO STOP US.

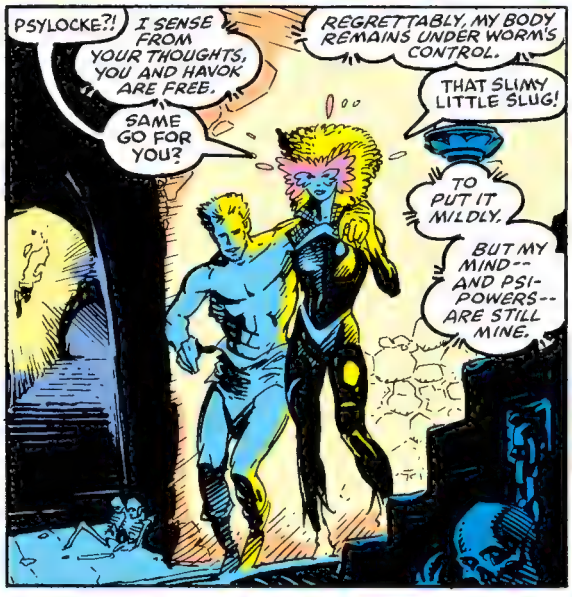

TRUE--BUT THE EMPRESS MAY NOT LOOK KINDLY ON THOSE WHO TRIFLE WITH HER SISTER.
ZALADANE'S --WHAT?!?
THAT'S CRAZY!
I SUPPOSE, THOUGH, IN A WAY I SHOULD THANK HER.

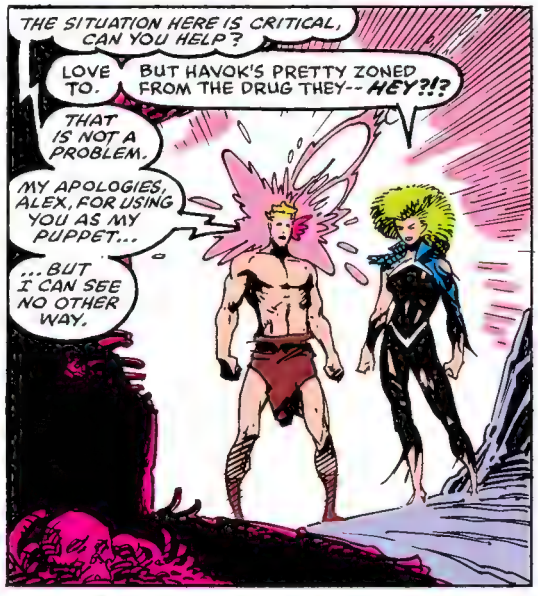

BECAUSE THE POWER TRANSFERENCE BETWEEN US...
...SOMEHOW ALSO DESTROYED THE MARAUDER MALICE...
...WHO'D GRAFTED ITSELF ONTO MY PSYCHE.
ENOUGH TALK!
IF ZALADANE TRULY CARED...
...SHE WOULDN'T HAVE LEFT THE FEMALE HERE WITH US.

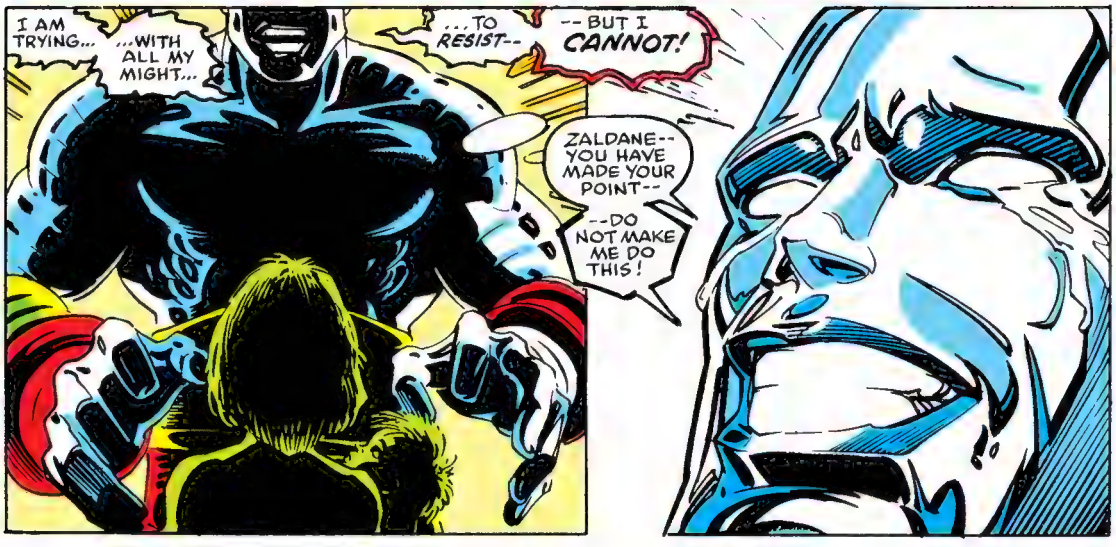
MEANWHILE...
...UPSTAIRS, IN THE THRONE ROOM...
AHHH, VENGEANCE--
--HOW SWEET IT TASTES--
--ESPECIALLY WHEN SEASONED BY VICTORY OVER A MOST HATED FOE.
DON'T YOU AGREE, KA-ZAR?
FRANKLY, I HOPE YOU CHOKE ON IT.
DEAR ME, I FORGET MY MANNERS--
--I BID WELCOME TO MY HOUSE, LORD NO LONGER OF THE SAVAGE LAND...
...TO YOU AND YOUR LADY WIFE, SHANNA, THE EVER-SO-SULTRY SHE-DEVIL...
...AND AS WELL TO NEREEL, CHIEF OF THE SO-CALLED UNITED TRIBES,
I TRUST MY SERVANTS HAD LITTLE TROUBLE IN "PERSUADING" YOU TO ACCEPT MY INVITATION TO JOIN ME.
SKIP THE FALSE PLEASANTRIES, TYRANT!
WE'VE PLAYED THIS SCENE BEFORE.
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU MANAGED TO TURN OUR X-MEN FRIENDS AGAINST US...
...BUT YOU CAN BET WE'LL FIND A WAY TO BEAT YOU AGAIN!
DEFIANT TO THE LAST, I LIKE THAT.
AND ONCE WORM HAS "HAD HIS WAY" WITH YOU...
...YOU'LL ALL KNOW KNOW FIRST-HAND HOW IT FEELS...
...TO BE MY SLAVES.
REGRETTABLY, HIS INFLUENCE IS LIMITED TO FLESH...
...BUT I'VE OTHER MEANS TO CONTROL COLOSSUS.
SHALL I DEMONSTRATE...
...BY HAVING HIM SLAY YOUR BABY, KA-ZAR...
...AND NEREEL'S SON?


MEANWHILE...
I WANT TO HURT HER.
I WANT HAVOK TO SEE HER BLOOD...
...HELPLESS TO SAVE THIS FEMALE HE PROFESSES TO LOVE.
THEY'RE SERIOUS!
I ALWAYS KNEW ZALADANE'S SERVITORS WERE CRUEL--
--BUT THIS IS BEYOND EVEN THEM!
WHEN DID THEY TURN SO--EVIL?!!
IF THEY GET THEIR HANDS ON ME--
--WOW!?!
SKAM!
JUST FLEXED MY ARMS--
...PULLED MY CHAINS OUT OF THE WALL!
THWAK!
I'VE NEVER HAD THAT KIND OF STRENGTH.
NOT ABOUT TO LET IT GO TO WASTE.
BRAINCHILD--A GUN--NO TIME TO--
--SURPRISE!
HARDLY FELT A THING!
INVULNERABILITY, TOO?
SAY GOOD-NIGHT, LITTLE MAN.
flik!
WAY TO GO, BABE!
BUSTED UP THOSE SLUDGE-HEADS REAL GOOD!
NEVER SEEN YOU DO--OR LOOK--BETTER!
ALEX SOUNDS AS WILD IN HIS OWN WAY...
...AS OUR JAILORS.
SAME GOES FOR YOU, TOO, MY DARLING.
BEEN ACHING SO LONG TO DO THIS. TO HOLD YOU, KISS YOU, ONCE MORE AS MYSELF, AND NOT MALICE'S PUPPET!
GRACIOUS--I'M TALLER THAN HE IS!
WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE, WHY ARE WE BOTH SO CHANGED?!!

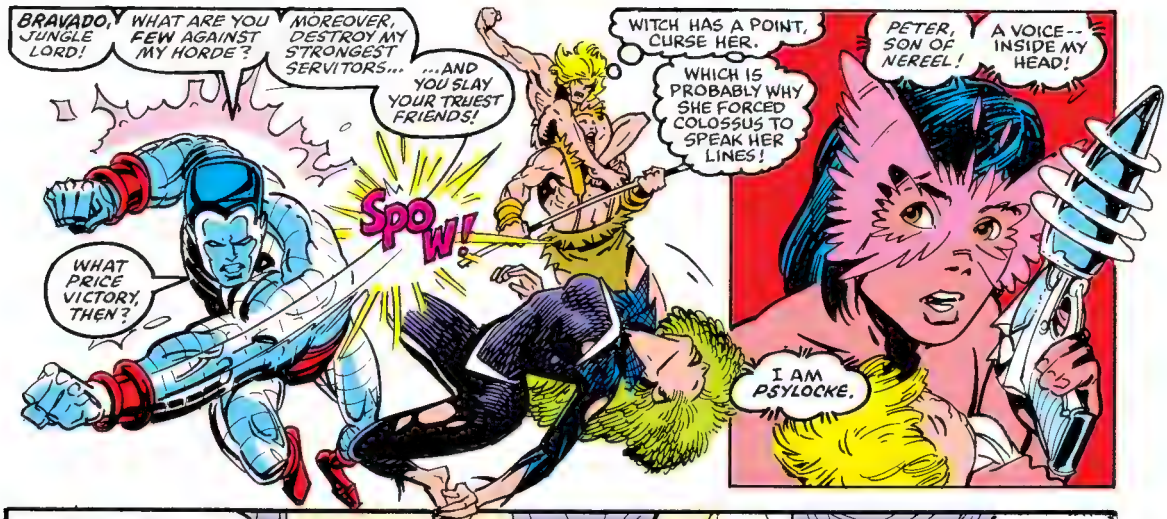

ZALADANE, FOR PITY'S SAKE--!
I HAVE NO PITY.
YOUR FIGHT'S WITH US, NOT THESE CHILDREN!
BUT SHANNA, IT WILL CAUSE YOU SUCH PAIN TO SEE THEM SLAIN...
PLEASE, I BEG YOU, HAVE MERCY!
...AS IT WILL NOBLE COLOSSUS TO SLAY THEM.
I'LL--DO ANYTHING YOU ASK.
MY DEAR, SWEET SHANNA...
...YOU'LL DO THAT ANYWAY.
LORNA?


PSYLOCKE?!
I SENSE FROM YOUR THOUGHTS, YOU AND HAVOK ARE FREE.
SAME GO FOR YOU?
REGRETTABLY, MY BODY REMAINS UNDER WORM'S CONTROL.
THAT SLIMY LITTLE SLUG!
TO PUT IT MILDLY.
BUT MY MIND--AND PSI-POWERS--ARE STILL MINE.

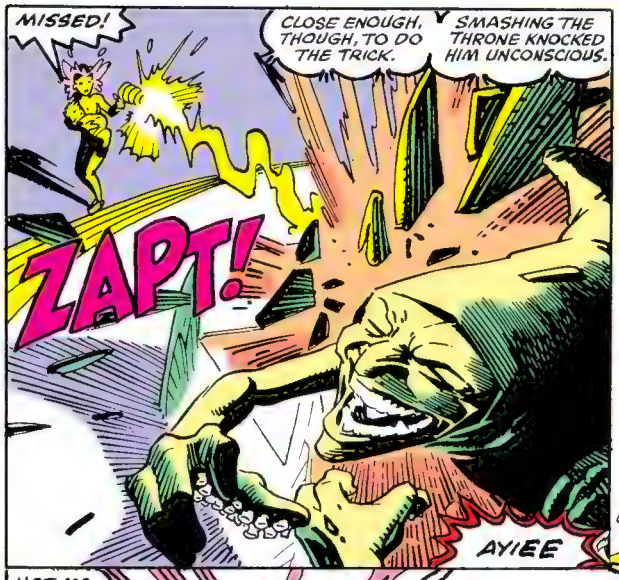

THE SITUATION HERE IS CRITICAL, CAN YOU HELP?
LOVE TO.
BUT HAVOK'S PRETTY ZONED FROM THE DRUG THEY--HEY?!?
THAT IS NOT A PROBLEM.
MY APOLOGIES, ALEX, FOR USING YOU AS MY PUPPET...
...BUT I CAN SEE NO OTHER WAY.


I AM TRYING...
...WITH ALL MY MIGHT...
...TO RESIST--
--BUT I CANNOT!
ZALDANE--YOU HAVE MADE YOUR POINT--
--DO NOT MAKE ME DO THIS!

SUDDENLY, THOUGH, AS COLOSSUS' GIANT HANDS CLOSE ABOUT THEIR VICTIMS...
SKRA KAM!
KTHOOM!
S'PRISE, BUNKIES!
CAN IT BE-- IMPOSSIBLE!
I STRIPPED LORNA DANE OF HER MUTANT POWER, WHERE COULD SHE HAVE GAINED SUCH STRENGTH?
NO MATTER. SHE IS BUT FLESH.
COLOSSUS CAN EASILY SMASH HER TO A PULP.
FUD!
NOT TODAY, SIS!
THIS IS CRAZY! I'M STANDING TOE-TO-TOE WITH PETER, GIVING AS GOOD AS I GET!
BUT BOY, I GOTTA ADMIT--
--IT'S FUN!
ONLY REGRET IS THAT IT'S A PAL TAKING THE LUMPS, AND NOT MY SO-CALLED "SISTER"!
BUT I SWEAR...
...HER TURN'LL COME--
BDOW!
--WITH A VENGEANCE!
EV'YBODY'S FORGOT 'BOUT ME!
GRAB THIS GUN...
...GO PROTECT MY MAM!
SNAPKT!
TOLD YOU SO, ZALADANE.
YOUR TIDE'S TURNED!


BRAVADO, JUNGLE LORD!
WHAT ARE YOU FEW AGAINST MY HORDE?
MOREOVER, DESTROY MY STRONGEST SERVITORS...
...AND YOU SLAY YOUR TRUEST FRIENDS!
SPOW!
WHAT PRICE VICTORY, THEN?
WITCH HAS A POINT, CURSE HER.
WHICH IS PROBABLY WHY SHE FORCED COLOSSUS TO SPEAK HER LINES!
PETER, SON OF NEREEL!
A VOICE-- INSIDE MY HEAD!
I AM PSYLOCKE.

WORM IS THE KEY TO ZALADANE'S STRENGTH.
HIS POWER ENSLAVES THE X-MEN AND MANY IN HER ARMY.
ELIMINATE HIM, AND ALL ARE FREE!
HEH HEH HEH

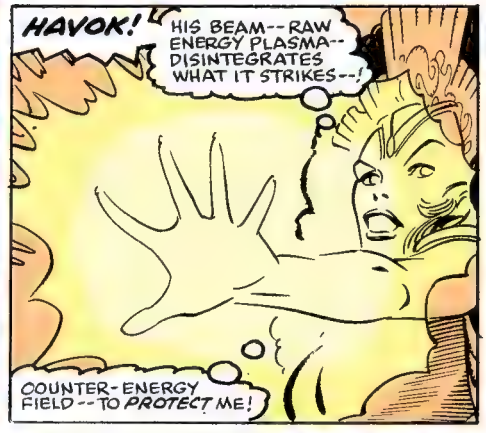

MISSED!
CLOSE ENOUGH, THOUGH, TO DO THE TRICK.
SMASHING THE THRONE KNOCKED HIM UNCONSCIOUS.
ZAPT!
AYIEE

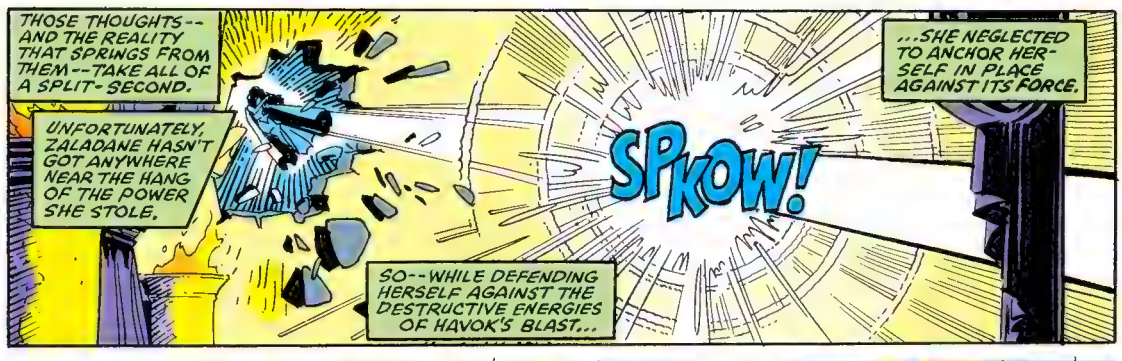
HEY, EVERYBODY'S FROZEN, WHAT GIVES?
WITHOUT WORM'S WILL TO MOTIVATE HIS SLAVES...
...WE ARE ALL IMPRISONED WITHIN OUR CONTROL MEMBRANES.

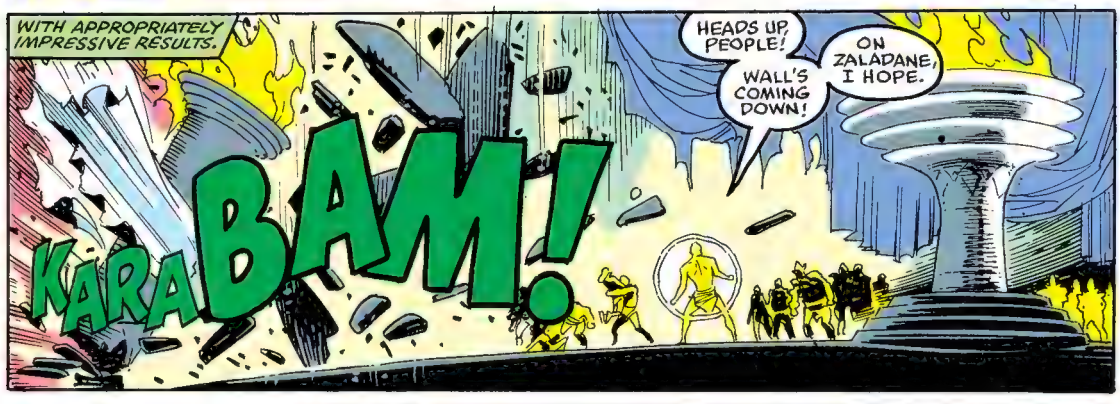
NOT ME, BETTS!
NOT--
--ANY--
--LONGER!
I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY.
UNFORTUNATELY, MY MEMBRANE'S UNDERNEATH MY ARMOR. CAN'T REMOVE ONE WITHOUT THE OTHER, AND THERE'S NO TIME TO TRY.
SEE TO THE OTHERS, ALISON. SINCE NOTHING CAN HARM ME THROUG MY ARMOR, I SHOULD BE SAFE ENOUGH AS I AM.

SPEAKING OF THOSE "OTHERS"...
HEAD'S MUZZY--
--PSYLOCKE DID WHAT SHE COULD...
...BUT I CAN BARELY STRING ONE THOUGHT...
...AFTER ANOTHER.
ZALADANE'S GOONS--
--GANGING UP ON LORNA!
AND UP ABOVE--
--ZALADANE HERSELF--
--GOT THE DROP ON THE X-MEN!

ZAM!
SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS BEFORE--
--WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE--
--WOULD HAVE SAVED A LOT OF LIVES--
--SPARED EVERYONE A LOT OF GRIEF!


HAVOK!
HIS BEAM--RAW ENERGY PLASMA--DISINTEGRATES WHAT IT STRIKES--!
COUNTER-ENERGY FIELD--TO PROTECT ME!


THOSE THOUGHTS--AND THE REALITY THAT SPRINGS FROM THEM--TAKE ALL OF A SPLIT-SECOND.
UNFORTUNATELY, ZALADANE HASN'T GOT ANYWHERE NEAR THE HANG OF THE POWER SHE STOLE.
SPKOW!
...SHE NEGLECTED TO ANCHOR HERSELF IN PLACE AGAINST ITS FORCE.
SO--WHILE DEFENDING HERSELF AGAINST THE DESTRUCTIVE ENERGIES OF HAVOK'S BLAST...


WITH APPROPRIATELY IMPRESSIVE RESULTS.
HEADS UP, PEOPLE!
WALL'S COMING DOWN!
ON ZALADANE, I HOPE.
KARA BAM!

Bullpen Bulletins

Quote of the Month

"Nothing personal, Gail, but I'm going to have to kick your butt!"

–Wendell Vaughn
QUASAR #1

Stan's Soapbox

Hi, Heroes! In answer to countless demands (from my cousin, Calvin Countless), I figured this would be a good time to bring you up to date on Marvel's various movie and TV projects.

Captain America: Even as you read this, the filming is about to start in Europe, and, naturally, Cap's villain will be the ever-loathsome **Red Skull**! (For more of the dazzlin' details, don't miss the "Soapbox" page in this month's MARVEL AGE!)

Spider-Man: Your battlin' Bullpen finally convinced the Hollywood wizards to stop writing screenplay after screenplay that didn't correctly portray the ol' wall-crawler. Now WE'RE gonna work on the movie story for Spidey--so just wait! It'll be coming your way before you can wiggle a web! Also in preparation (which means the scripts are being written right now!) are movies for **Iron Man, Sub-Mariner** and--buckle your seat belt, brother--**Wolverine!** We're even playing with an idea for **Ant-Man**, but hey, I've gotta save some surprises for next time!

As for TV, it won't be long before we'll be announcing **Daredevil** in his own series! And, for the biggest, wildest surprise of all, who do you think may be co-starring with the **Incredible Hulk** in his next made-for-television spectacular? If you guessed the giant-sized, glitzy, glamorous, gorgeous **She-Hulk** you wouldn't be too far wrong!

Well, that's about it for now. Just didn't want you to think we were all asleep over here at Marvel West--even if we are!

Excelsior!

Stan

ITEM: Hey, boys and girls, what time is it? That's right, it's comic book convention time! That's the time when hotels from coast to coast are taken over by comic book writers, artists, editors, publishers, letterers, colorists, back-issue dealers, and most importantly, fans! It's too late to tell you about Oakland's Wondercon (we had a blast!), but if you hurry you can still join the fun at the following gala gatherings:

CHICAGO COMICON
June 30-July 2
Ramada O'Hare Hotel
Rosemont, IL

(Guests include legendary Soapbox-scribe *Stan* (the Man) *Lee*, Editor in Chief and THOR writer *Tom* (Top Dog) *DeFalco*, Executive Editor and writer of both CAPTAIN AMERICA and QUASAR *Mark* (the Remarker) *Gruenwald*, PUNISHER writer and editor *Carl* (the Married Guy) *Potts*, and Mutant editor and S.H.I.E.L.D. scripter *Bob* (Over 30) *Harras*.)

For more info (like how much it costs, for example) contact CHICAGO COMICON, c/o Larry Charet, 1219 W. Devon, Chicago IL 60660; telephone (312) 743-4493.

DALLAS FANTASY FAIR
July 14-16
Sheraton Park Central Hotel
Dallas, TX

(Guests include *Mark* (Him Again?) *Gruenwald*, AMAZING SPIDER-MAN writer *David* (Rhymes with Pickle-my-knee) *Michelinie*, DR. DOOM/DR. STRANGE Graphic Novel penciler *Mike* (Don't even try to pronounce it) *Mignola*, along with a pair of comic art legends, *Harvey Kurtzman* and *Will Eisner*.)

For more info contact DALLAS FANTASY FAIR, P.O. Box 820488, Dallas TX 75382; telephone (214) 349-3369.

And tell 'em Marvel sent you!

Pro File:

Renee Witterstaetter

Assistant Editor on: CONAN SAGA, SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN, SILVER SURFER, WHAT IF...?, WOLVERINE SAGA, and the Kull Graphic Novel

Marvel freelance credits (past): A five-page story in the SILVER SURFER ANNUAL; HULK and NEW MUTANTS letter pages; articles for MARVEL AGE

Marvel freelance credits (present): It's a secret!!!

My place of birth is: Texarkana--the Texas side, that is! An' do-o-o-n't yu fergit it!

People who knew me in high school thought I was: An impostor (I lost megatons over one summer, and actually began talking to people).

My hobbies are: Reading, writing, going to movies, photography, cooking, putting my car in and out of the shop.

My pet peeves are: People who think they are the absolute authority on anything, people who destroy the environment or mistreat animals, people who say I look like Meryl Streep, my car!

My favorite performers are: Katharine Hepburn, Gene Kelly, Jimmy Stewart, Harrison Ford, Sean Connery, Jay Leno, UB40--but only recently.

The last good books I read were: *The Funny Papers* by Tom DeHaven, *Endgame Enigma* by James P. Hogan, and *Tourist Season* by Carl Haussen.

The last good movies I saw were: *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, and high-quality rental tapes of *Harold and Maude, The Man Who Would Be King, The Wind and the Lion*, and *Once Upon a Time in America*.

If they were making a movie of my life, I'd like to see my part played by: Someone with a smaller nose and a better figure.

My oddest habit is: Eating picante sauce with just about everything.

My greatest accomplishment outside the comics field is: My journalistic writing for newspapers in Texas; living 25 years (so far); having Don King tell me I look like Cleopatra.

The reason I got into comics was: Fate! Plus the fact that I fell in love with Peter Parker at a very young age.

The biggest influences on my work include: Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Dr. Laurence F. McNamee (my Shakespeare teacher and sportswriting partner), my parents, Connie Penny (my high school journalism teacher), old movies, and travelling a lot! (Hint, hint.)

The single work of which I am most proud is: My as-yet-unpublished children's book, *Kerry and the Scary Things*. Getting *Mike Zeck* to draw my caricature.

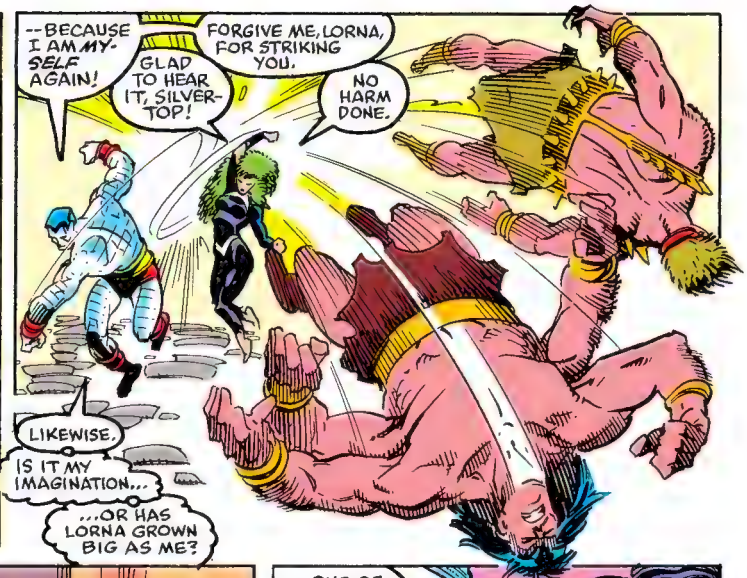
My greatest unfulfilled ambition in the comics field is: To someday be Mike Carlin's boss.

The worst part of my job is: Listening to my editor *Craig Anderson* explain why we need more girls on SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN covers, and seeing by the higher sales figures that he's right!

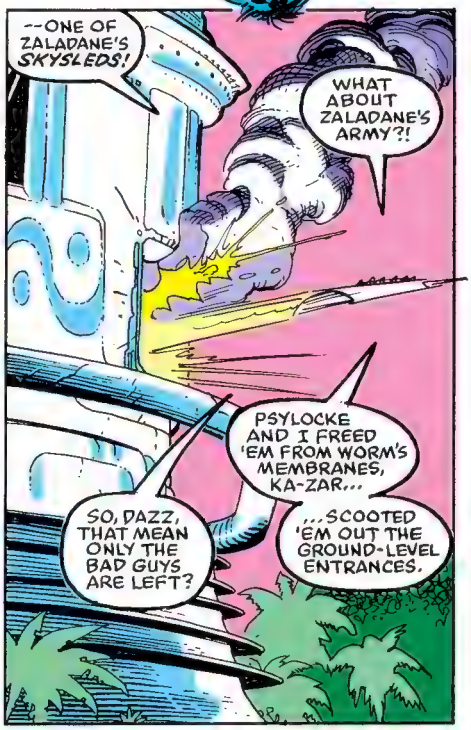
When nobody's looking I like to: Steal pens from *Glenn Herdling*, doodle on my desk calendar.

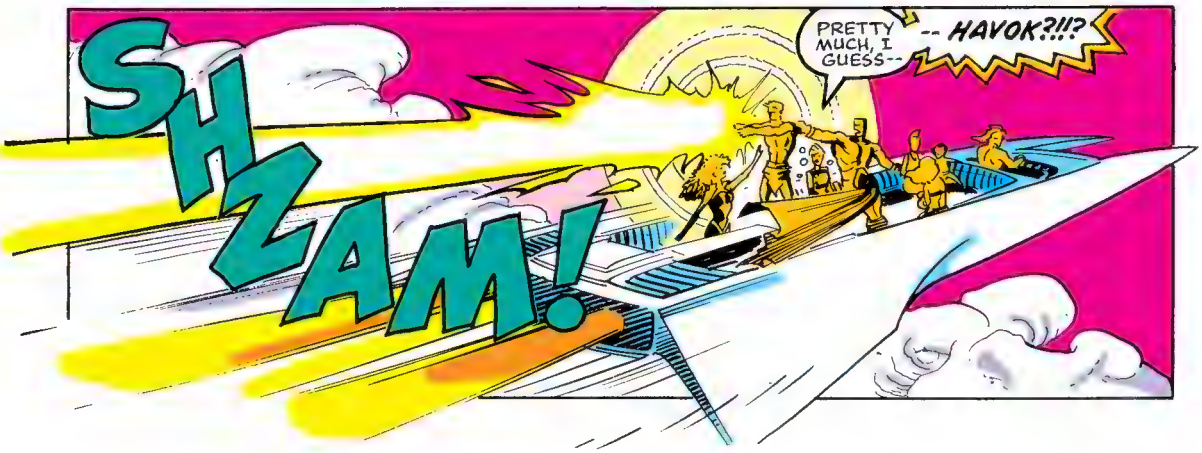
The one thing I really want the world to know about me is: I'm really not Cleopatra, but sometimes I do dress up like Napoleon Bonaparte.

ZALADANE MUST BE UNCONSCIOUS--
--OR DEAD--

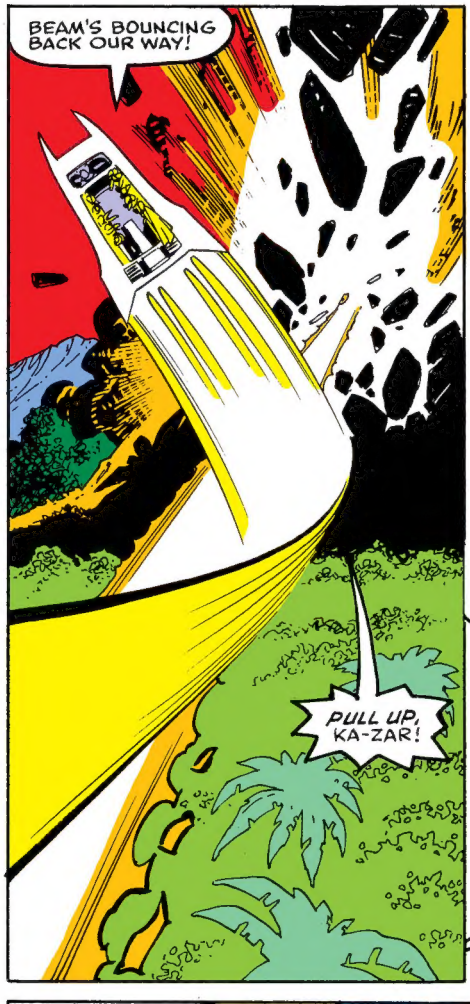

--BECAUSE I AM MYSELF AGAIN!
GLAD TO HEAR IT, SILVER-TOP!
FORGIVE ME, LORNA, FOR STRIKING YOU.
NO HARM DONE.
LIKEWISE.
IS IT MY IMAGINATION...
...OR HAS LORNA GROWN BIG AS ME?

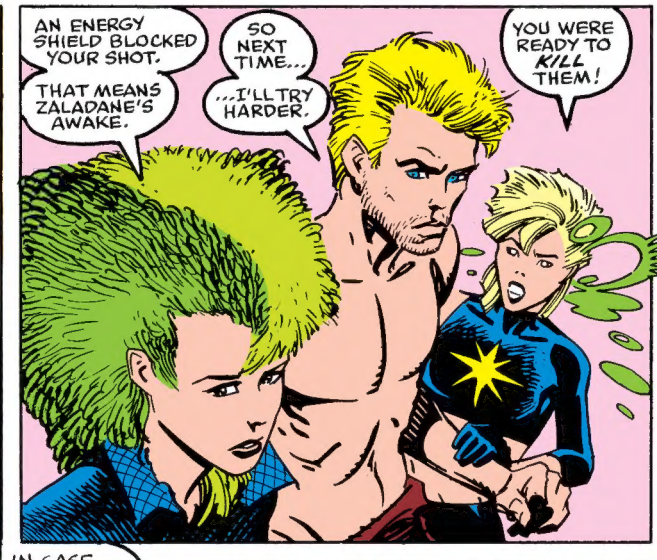
PLACE IS COMIN' DOWN, 'ROUND OUR EARS!
STOP USING SO MANY CONTRACTIONS, KEVIN!
YOU'LL SET A BAD EXAMPLE FOR THE BABY!
IF THERE ARE NO OBJECTIONS--
--GRAMMATICAL OR OTHERWISE--
--I SUGGEST WE VACATE THE PREMISES.
PRONTO!
WE X-MEN EVER GIVE UP THE SUPER-HERO BIZ...
...BET WE'D HAVE A GREAT FUTURE IN URBAN DEMOLITION!
OVER HERE--


--ONE OF ZALADANE'S SKYSLEDS!
WHAT ABOUT ZALADANE'S ARMY?!
PSYLOCKE AND I FREED 'EM FROM WORM'S MEMBRANES, KA-ZAR...
...SCOOTED 'EM OUT THE GROUND-LEVEL ENTRANCES.
SO, DAZZ, THAT MEAN ONLY THE BAD GUYS ARE LEFT?

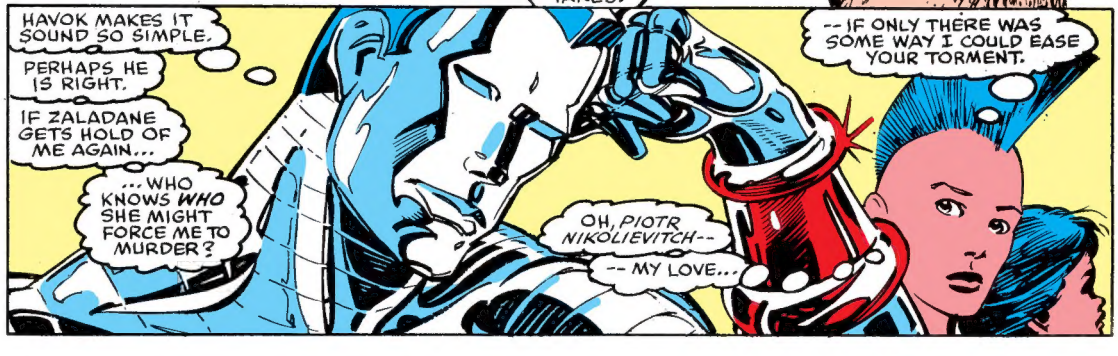

SHZAM!
PRETTY MUCH, I GUESS--
-- HAVOK?!!?

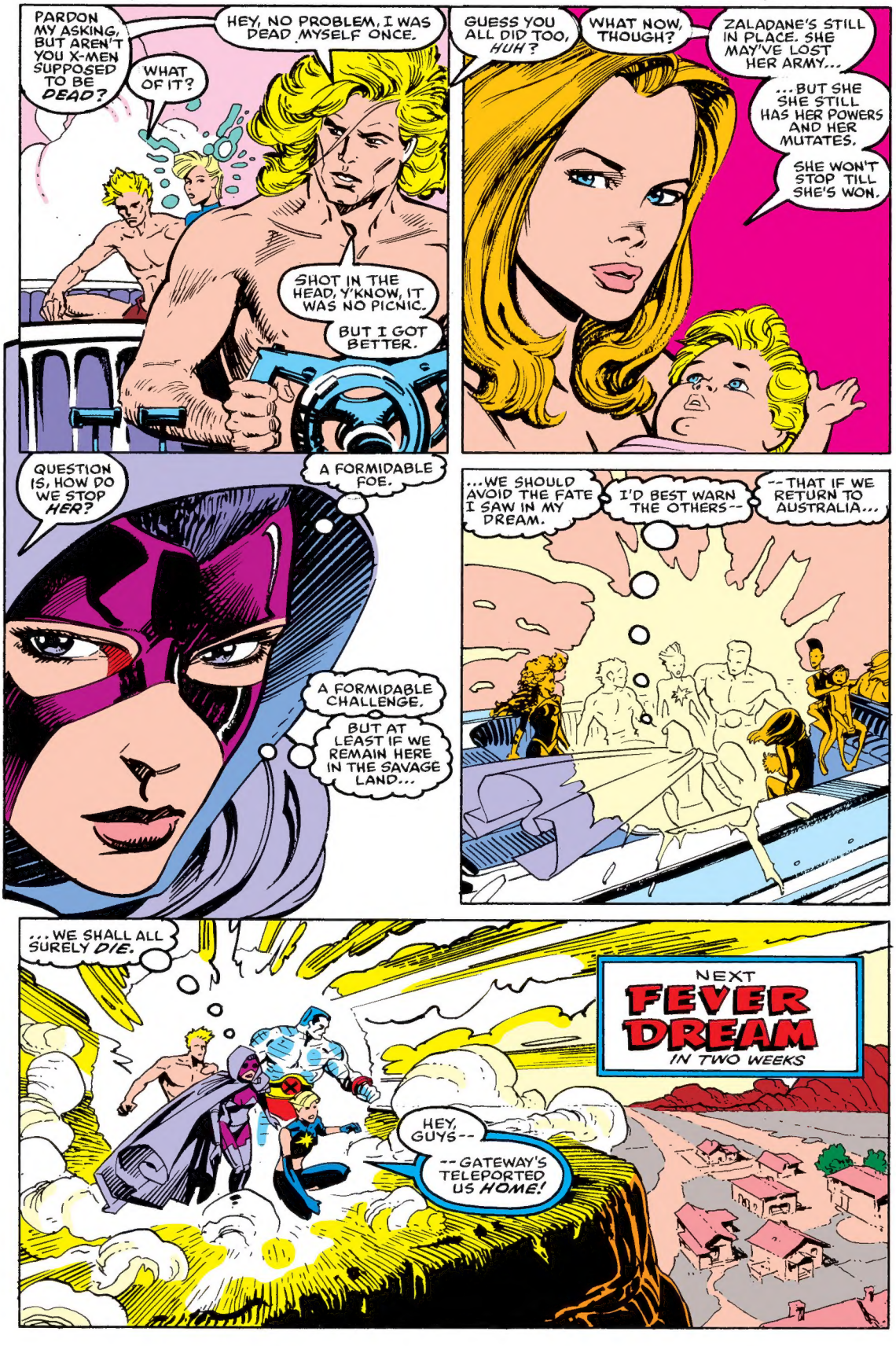
SO MUCH FOR THAT IDEA.
VARK!


BEAM'S BOUNCING BACK OUR WAY!
PULL UP, KA-ZAR!


AN ENERGY SHIELD BLOCKED YOUR SHOT.
THAT MEANS ZALADANE'S AWAKE.
SO NEXT TIME...
...I'LL TRY HARDER.
YOU WERE READY TO KILL THEM!

IN CASE YOU HADN'T NOTICED, DAZZLER...
...THEY HAD WORSE IN MIND FOR US.
SO WE GO DOWN TO THEIR LEVEL, IS THAT IT?!
IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES.


HAVOK MAKES IT SOUND SO SIMPLE.
PERHAPS HE IS RIGHT.
IF ZALADANE GETS HOLD OF ME AGAIN...
...WHO KNOWS WHO SHE MIGHT FORCE ME TO MURDER?
OH, PIOTR NIKOLIEVITCH--
-- MY LOVE...
-- IF ONLY THERE WAS SOME WAY I COULD EASE YOUR TORMENT.


PARDON MY ASKING, BUT AREN'T YOU X-MEN SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD?
HEY, NO PROBLEM, I WAS DEAD MYSELF ONCE.
WHAT OF IT?
SHOT IN THE HEAD, Y'KNOW, IT WAS NO PICNIC.
BUT I GOT BETTER.
GUESS YOU ALL DID TOO, HUH?
WHAT NOW, THOUGH?
ZALADANE'S STILL IN PLACE. SHE MAY'VE LOST HER ARMY...
...BUT SHE SHE STILL HAS HER POWERS AND HER MUTATES.
SHE WON'T STOP TILL SHE'S WON.
QUESTION IS, HOW DO WE STOP HER?
A FORMIDABLE FOE.
A FORMIDABLE CHALLENGE.
BUT AT LEAST IF WE REMAIN HERE IN THE SAVAGE LAND...
...WE SHOULD AVOID THE FATE I SAW IN MY DREAM.
I'D BEST WARN THE OTHERS--
--THAT IF WE RETURN TO AUSTRALIA...
...WE SHALL ALL SURELY DIE.
NEXT
FEVER DREAM
IN TWO WEEKS
HEY, GUYS--
--GATEWAY'S TELEPORTED US HOME!

BOB HARRAS: editor — DARYL EDELMAN: assistant editor

X-MAIL

% MARVEL COMICS GROUP —
387 Park Avenue South — New York, New York — 10016

Attention correspondents: if you don't want your full address printed, please be sure to tell us so!

Dear Chris,

You deserve a few hearty "thank you's"—you came through. After I complained endlessly about the vague, confusing plotlines in the Inferno series, you turned around and wrote issue #244—a return to the X-Men as I (and countless other longtime fans) have known them over these many years. These may be different characters, but the magical style of writing that breathes life into them has, at last, returned. Ororo displayed an amusing mixture of the maturity she has gained through the years and the innocence and naivete from when she first joined, while the tragedy of Rogue's situation was handled too well for words.

This issue presents quite a shocking change from the cardboard characters engaged in nonstop slugfests that we've seen ever since that other annoyingly vague crossover, The Fall of The Mutants. Please, don't stop now. Remember, the success of the X-Men has always been based on its superb character development. I implore you—strive to make every issue as entertaining as #244. Oh, and bring back Xavier (please?)!

John D. Moon
807 Bomier St.
DePere, WI 54115

Charlie will be appearing in the pages of MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS, co-starring in a *Starjammers* feature, John . . . and an eventual return to the mutant titles is (we promise) a virtual certainty.

Dear X-People,

Well, I suppose it had to happen sometime. Not one funny X-MEN story, but *two* funny X-MEN stories! "Ladies' Night" and "Men!" hit pretty much the right note after all the trials and tribulations of the Genosha and Inferno storylines. I enjoyed seeing everyone relax, let their hair down and have some fun for a change. Alison was right; they were becoming stereotypes, going over the same obstacle course time and time again. This was what they needed; a chance for everyone to unwind and be themselves.

First though, a few words about the "new" characters. I don't think we'll miss much if we never see "M Squad" again. The Four Stooges didn't leave all that much of an impression in #240, and I'm still not impressed now that I've seen them in action. They don't even use long-life batteries in their equipment! All right, so they could be dangerous, but they're still a bunch of nutters! Jubilee, on the other hand, is a horse of a completely different color. She is the same darling we saw in the 1986 Annuals, isn't she? Her first appearance gave us a few hints of an intriguing new power. Now we know as much as she does about her capabilities. It makes a pleasant change to see a mutant without the firepower of a detachment of Marines at her fingertips. I can't wait to see more of this girl. I admire her style!

As for the heroines of our little tale, it was good to see them have some knock-down, drag-out, no-holds-barred *fun* at last. I especially enjoyed Alison's little "surprise" for Ororo. Well, I suppose she has been getting just a little bit too serious about things lately. Can this be the team that faced the Marauders, the Brood, and the Impossible Man without a qualm, shaking in their socks at the threat posed by the dreaded *hairstylist*? It's scenes like this that help to maintain the realism of the characters.

After the ladies had their fun, I suppose it was only fair to let the other little kiddies out to play. It's been too long since I read a story so full of in-jokes and pure comedy as #245. A bar called Munden's in Sydney, eh? But where were the tourbots? And if you won't mention Bob the lizard, I won't. There were some great scenes here. That wonderfully downplayed barbecue, the Mayor of Sydney's resignation, even the Daily Planet studio. (Whozzat?) The only idea I didn't like was the "Jean Bomb." Come on now, what *is* this thing you have about redheads with apocalyptic tendencies? You ought to leave the "clones of Jean Grey" issue alone now that it's been settled. Fortunately, not even this unnecessary piece of bad taste could spoil one of the longest consistently funny runs in the X-MEN that I can remember. Unfortunately, the Cosmic Cutie Commandos (yeuchh!!!) very nearly did. This was so over-the-top it was just about in orbit! As for that cheerful little homecoming on page 30, it made a perfect lead-in to the *Meltdown* Limited Series.

I came back down to earth with a bit of a thump right at the end there. The escape of Donald Pierce is definitely no laughing matter; he nearly succeeded in doing away with Professor X once, and his cyborg parts make him no pushover physically, either. The only way this situation could be worse is if he still hasn't got his head screwed on straight after his attempted coup of the Inner Circle back in the NEW MUTANTS Graphic Novel. (What was that you said, Chris? He hasn't? Oh ****!) Speaking of which, I've found a little hiccup that needs fixing. Pierce was the White Bishop, not the White King of the Lords Cardinal. Perhaps the guard on page 31 didn't play chess?

All this leaves me with only one question to ask: *what next?* I have a few suggestions you might like to think about. Perhaps a little background on Gateway? The Reavers dropped a few hints in #229 that have had me racking my brains ever since. How about a bit more on the problems their "invisibility" gives to the X-Men? What I would really like to know, though, is what happened to the Siege Perilous? It hasn't been mentioned even once since it was used to dispose of the Reavers. I realize that overusing it as a deus ex machina could reduce the whole book to a save-the-world-three-times-before-breakfast formula, but remember, the Siege was entrusted to the X-Men for them to use *as they willed*. Somehow I don't think the Guardian of the Omniverse meant it to be tucked away and forgotten about, like the X-Men seem to have done. Well, you know best, I suppose. You'd better!

Until the next time!

Bruce W. Grant
85 Hayton Road
Aberdeen, Scotland

What next, Bruce? Good question! How-zabout the return of Forge, the reappearance of Magneto, a visit with Banshee and . . . a whole new team of X-Men?
Interested?
We thought so.

Dear X-Mail,

Please, please, please, please keep Rogue's hair like in ish #244! She looks like a respectable woman now. Not some Bon Jovi-ite from who knows where. In short, I love the 'do.

The M Squad. Hmmm . . . I guess it works for an interim issue. I like Jubilee, though. Try not to have her sent home by Gateway. The X-MEN aren't babysitters, but they lost a facet of their team when Kitty left. They need somebody younger to spice them up although, Longshot's naivete brings out the best of the team sometimes. I just hope that aspect of his personality hasn't been too damaged by Inferno.

More on Rogue. Give her a break, willya? Let her and Carol make peace with each other. And for Pete's sake, find a way for her to control her powers. She needs to fall in love.

Mr. Silvestri's work has definitely improved. He is refining his style quite nicely. I'm sure he will mature into a great artist.

Thank you, Marvel, for creating the World's Greatest Comic. By the way, the FF doesn't deserve that kind of billing. If they were so great, THEY would have been to print twice a month during the summer, and would cost $1.00.

So, until Rogue and Wolvie die, Make Mine Marvel!

Stan Kabala III
Bridgewater, NJ

Now, now, Stan . . . don't insult the Fantastic Four. You know how that upsets the Thing.

Dear Guys,

Great issue, that #245. I mean, who in their right mind would ever think of an idea like an alien invasion? And then, on top of that, you centered the invasion in Australia! What a great idea.

Ah, the cosmic grandeur.
Ah, the splendor.
Ah, the excitement.
Wow.

You know, this is the way alien invasions were meant to be. Gosh, I wonder what your competition thought? They must feel pretty ridiculous now that you guys have done the definitive alien invasion.

Again, wow.

But, all praise aside, I noticed on the cover that Longshot's clenched fist has four fingers. A mistake? Nah, everybody knows that Marvel doesn't make mistakes (and this issue proves that point rather conclusively, I must say. Wow!) No, there is a simple explanation for Longshot's extra finger: he is on earth and earth people have four fingers; his old gloves were probably getting on his nerves, so he had the girls pick him up a new pair when they were on their shopping trip, hence the fourth finger.

Simple. Now, how about a No-Prize for the effort of explaining this phenomenon? Just wondering.

But before I go, once again, wow!

Steven J. Rubick
2200 W. Lowden Street
Apartment 24
Ft. Worth, TX 76110

It's whizzing your way now, Steve. Thanks for your handy solution (ouch, did we say that?)

MINUTEMEN
Bluntman